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Details of benefit claimants leaked after council error

COUNCIL 'SORRY' OVER DATA LEAK

Dragon marks start of Basingstoke Festival

HUNDREDS of people enjoyed a carnival-style procession led by a giant steel dragon through Basingstoke town centre on Friday.

The celebration was a pre-event to the biggest ever Basingstoke Festival launching on June 20.

Performers were joined by residents to unveil the programme. See page 3.

STAFF at Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council are trying to track down the person they accidently sent the personal details of almost 2,000 housing benefit claimants to.

By **Katriona Ormiston**
news@basingstokeobserver.co.uk

Names and addresses of about 1,900 housing benefit claimants were mistakenly leaked by a council worker.

The council warned victims of the leak about the error last week.

The details were given out when a member of the public was replying to a Freedom of Information Request asking the number of housing benefit claimants renting from a private landlord.

Another part of the spreadsheet with the personal details of the residents was included.

But the council said bank details were not released so victims should not be at risk from fraud.

Staff have tried to contact the member of the public but have so far not had a reply.

Council Director Laura Taylor said: "I am very sorry that this mistake has happened and for the inconvenience and distress this may cause.

"We take the security of personal information extremely seriously and we get a high volume of Freedom of Information Requests.

We have taken immediate steps to further tighten our procedures and will act on any lessons from the review and investigation.

"It is likely that the person who got the information was making enquiries to lots of different councils to compare statistics and will not even realise that they have the personal information, but we cannot be 100 per cent certain.

"I do not want to worry people unnecessarily but felt that it was only right that we let the people affected know what has happened and give them advice on what they can do to protect themselves with our help."

The council wrote to victims with advice on how to protect themselves, including an offer to pay for extra monitoring of loans and other payments taken out in their name.

They have also set up a special helpline for affected residents to call for advice and help.

The council is launching its own internal review of its procedures and the Information Commissioner's Office will carry out an independent investigation.

The Freedom of Information Act 2000 was brought in to law to give public access to information held by public authorities.

It means members of the public can make information requests to public authorities which they must then reply to by law within 20 working days.

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Basingstoke Observer
Woman in line for Britain's Best Volunteer accolade
CHARITY SUCCESS 'IS TEAM EFFORT'

Read this newspaper online at **basingstokeobserver.co.uk**

Ceremony robes new town mayor

THE new Mayor of Basingstoke has pledged to focus on the importance of volunteers during his year as the town's figurehead.

By **Katriona Ormiston**
news@basingstokeobserver.co.uk

Roger Gardiner took over the mantle as mayor from Dan Putty last Thursday.

The traditional red mayoral robes and chains swapped hands during the mayor making ceremony in the council chamber of Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council offices.

Mr Putty said: "Being mayor has given me a fantastic chance to meet some of the people across the borough who make it such a place to be proud of."

Mr Gardiner's promise to recognise residents who volunteer comes during national Volunteer Week this week.

He said: "During my year as Deputy Mayor I have become increasingly aware of the important role played by the voluntary sector in Basingstoke and Deane and the range of services it provides.

"The huge number of residents involved receive little recognition from the wider community which would find itself so much poorer without the contribution of so many willing volunteers."

Mr Gardiner's chosen charities to support for the year are the Basingstoke Charities, which runs and maintains the Sir James Deane Almshouses in Basingstoke, Basingstoke Dial-a-Ride which provides door-to-door transport for people who cannot use buses or taxis, and Basingstoke Young Carers, which supports children and young people who look after a member of their family.

Mr Gardiner has served 18 years in Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council, representing the Calleva and then the Pamber and Silchester wards.

His wife Tricia Gardiner will be his mayoress.

The deputy mayor for 2014 to 2015 is Anne Court, whose deputy mayoress will be her daughter-in-law Colette Court.

At his last council meeting as the Mayor, Mr Putty presented awards to organisations to thank them for their contribution to the community.

They went to Michelle Le-Warne, of Overton, for work in the guiding community, Gordon Piper, of Basingstoke, for work in Hatch Warren, particularly in the Hatch Warren Community Centre, Kanak Rajgor, of Basingstoke, for work at Basingstoke Carnival Hall Community Centre and contribution to Basingstoke Multicultural Forum.

The business award went to Stephen Blatchford of Basingstoke company Chas A Blatchford and Sons Ltd, which designs and provides fake limbs and support services to the Ministry of Defence and NHS.

• Roger Gardiner (right) has succeeded Dan Putty (left) as Mayor of Basingstoke

Search on for attackers

POLICE say two unprovoked attacks in South Ham on Saturday in which two men were punched and kicked in the face could be linked.

Hampshire Constabulary officers are searching for a group of about three people who attacked a 22-year-old and 19-year-old.

The 22-year-old was kicked and punched in the face by a group of men while walking home on a footpath running from Claythorpe Road to Pinkerton Road between 2.30am and 3.30am.

He managed to get home and call police the next morning.

At 5am the 19-year-old was punched to the floor in St Michael's Road.

He raised the alarm at a nearby house and was treated in hospital for a fractured jaw.

DC Sol Koranteng who is investigating said: "We'd like to hear from you if you saw a group of possibly three men acting suspiciously in this area in the early hours of May 31.

"Both attacks were unprovoked and serious, leaving two young men with facial injuries."

Cash stolen from Alton spa

MORE than £500 cash has been stolen from a spa in Alton.

A man went into Spirit Day Spa in Normandy Street on Friday at about 1.30pm and said he was waiting for his girlfriend.

He was left alone in the shop for a short time and left.

Staff later discovered that two cash tins and about £500 had been stolen.

Police are appealing for anyone with information to get in touch.

The man is described as white, aged 40 to 45, of a medium build with short grey hair.

He was wearing light blue jeans, a light grey hooded top and was carrying a brown bag.

He spoke with a London or Cockney accent.

Hampshire Constabulary Police Constable Peter Wilkinson said: "If you think you know who this man is or you have any information which could assist this investigation, please contact us as soon as possible."

Call police on 101.

News Bites

Recycling cuts

A CONSULTATION on Basingstoke's recycling centre was launched on Monday amid council cuts.

Household waste recycling centres across Hampshire could see services or opening times slashed as a result of council cuts.

Residents are being asked to respond to a Hampshire County Council consultation on services by August 22.

Basingstoke's recycling centre, in Wade Road, is currently open seven days a week from 8am until 7pm from April to September, 8am to 4pm October to February and 8am to 5pm in March.

Go to hants.gov.uk/recycling.

Boars Bridge

MUSIC workshops, a beer tent, stalls and singers are among activities at a festival near Tadley this month.

Boars Bridge Festival will launch from June 20 to June 22 in the grounds of Boars Bridge House in Bramley Road, Little London, near Tadley.

Funds raised from the sixth festival will go again to the Berkshire Multiple Sclerosis Therapy Centre (BMSTC), which supports patients and families with Multiple Sclerosis in Hampshire, Surrey and Oxfordshire.

Lynne Whiteland, the event organiser, said: "2014 will see the sixth Boars Bridge Festival and as usual we have a wonderful line-up of local singers and professionals."

Spokeswoman for BMSTC Pippa Vincent-Cooke said: "We have seen how much the festival has developed and grown from strength to strength over the last few years. We are all very excited to see what 2014 has in store."

Leader decision

COUNCIL leaders are due to be chosen at the first full meeting of Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council since the elections.

A council leader, committee chairmen and members of the committees are to be decided at the meeting.

The full council starts from 6.30pm until 9.30pm in the council chamber at the council's London Road offices.

The appointments follow the Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council elections on May 22.

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Giant dragon launches programme for biggest Basingstoke Festival yet

A FIRE-BREATHING dragon was flanked by drummers and dancers launching the Basingstoke Festival programme on Friday.

By **Katriona Ormiston**
news@basingstokeobserver.co.uk

More than 300 people joined the carnival-style procession led by a five-metre tall steel dragon sculpture up Wote Street for a Market Place performance at 1pm.

Dancers from Basingstoke-based North Hampshire Academy of Dance showed off their skills with a specially-choreographed act.

The celebrations marked the unveiling of the Basingstoke Festival programme from June 20 to July 13.

Festival organizer Julia Tymukas said: "It was fantastic.

"At first I was standing in Market Place thinking 'there's nobody here', it was a bit disappointing. But then someone said that's because everyone is with the dragon following it up Wote Street.

"The dragon appeared with all these drums, and the dancers were brilliant – it was a really great atmosphere, the locals loved it.

"And it marks what is to come at the Basingstoke Festival.

"It is really feeling in its third year that it is becoming an event people are getting really involved with."

More than 100 performances and shows are set to make this year's the biggest festival yet.

Acts include big names like actor-comedian Dawn French and world-famous violinist Nigel Kennedy as well as exhibitions, walks, street theatre, dances.

The festival culminates in the big outdoor music event called Basingstoke Live on Saturday and Sunday, July 12 and 13, at War Memorial Park.

Mr Kennedy, who is at the Anvil on July 9, said: "It's great to be in Basingstoke as part of this festival which breaks through so many cultural boundaries. I look forward to seeing you there."

The festival is co-ordinated by Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council.

Cabinet member for partnerships Cathy Osselton said: "What a fantastic line-up we've pulled together this year, not just the big names but the up and coming artistes from the Basingstoke area itself, such as the Dynamix dancers and Oakley's own celebration of talent."

To see the programme, go to basingstokefestival.co.uk.

News Bites

Charity funding

TWO mobility charities in Basingstoke have been given cash boosts of more than £1,000.

Basingstoke Dial A Ride was given £1,000 and Basingstoke Shopmobility was handed £200 by the Reading-based Atomic Weapons Establishment last week.

The charities support people with mobility problems helping isolated people get out and about.

Basingstoke resident Angela Waistell said: "If I didn't have the bus I would be in the house 24/7. It makes a massive difference to my life.

"When I come to the shops at Basingstoke on the Dial A Ride bus, I then use a Shopmobility scooter to get around the shops. It means I've got independence."

E-fit after attack

POLICE have released an E-fit of a man they want to speak to in connection to a violent attack in Basingstoke.

The assault in Quilter Road took place between 10 and 10.30pm on April 19.

The computerised drawing was published by police on Tuesday.

The victim was punched once causing serious injury.

Anyone with information is asked to call police on 101.

Investigation after staff details breached

PERSONAL information of thousands of South Central Ambulance Service (SCAS) employees was accidently published online, a Freedom of Information request has revealed.

The age, sexuality and religion of almost 3,000 staff members employed by the service, which covers Oxfordshire, Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Hampshire, were released.

Details were inadvertently included on a report that had been uploaded onto its website.

SCAS were made aware of the breach by the Information Commissioner's Office on April 24.

A statement released by SCAS said: "An investigation is underway into the circumstances around this incident. We have undertaken a thorough review of all our published information on the website, and we can confirm that this was the only document affected.

"All affected individuals, including current and past members of staff, were informed of this breach in a personal letter from the chief executive officer (Will Hancock).

"We have already drafted an action plan to mitigate the risk of this happening again in the future. It should be noted that this information was not patient or clinically related."

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Man in court over hammer robbery case

A MAN wearing a motorbike helmet waving a hammer threatened a shop worker and assaulted a police officer in Sherfield on Loddon village store.

Several members of the public restrained the man to stop him from escaping before police arrested him at the The Shop in Reading Road.

It happened just after 10am on Monday, May 26.

James Barker, of Badgers Bank, Lychpit in Basingstoke, is due to appear at Winchester Crown Court on June 19 in connection with the Bank Holiday incident.

The 32-year-old is charged with attempted robbery, assaulting a police officer and failing to provide a specimen of breath.

The man in a motorcycle helmet entered the Londis store and demanded cash.

Nobody was injured in the incident.

The man was believed to be carrying some liquid which may have spilt when he was being restrained.

Police are reassuring members of the public that the liquid is not harmful.

Mr Barker appeared at Basingstoke Magistrates Court on Tuesday, May 27, and was remanded in custody until his next appearance at Winchester Crown Court on June 19.

Find us on Twitter @BasingstokeNews

Woman evicted from her bedsit

By **Katriona Ormiston**
news@basingstokeobserver.co.uk

A NOISY neighbour who had loud fights and parties has been evicted from her Stag Hill home for anti-social behaviour.

The woman, who lived in the top floor bedsit with her partner, was thrown out after Basingstoke County Court granted an eviction notice in March.

The woman, who is in her 20s, moved to the bedsit in April last year and hosted a housewarming party of about 35 people.

Over the next few months residents complained about loud arguments with her partner, in which items were thrown around the bedsit.

She ignored warnings from property owners Sovereign Housing Association.

Complaints included having visitors run up and down the stairs at all time of the day and night.

Sovereign's housing officer Maryanne Yesil said: "If a resident isn't willing to work with us, we have to take action to protect their neighbours and ensure they can continue living peacefully.

"We work closely with the police and local authorities to make sure that cases like this, where there is no easy solution, are dealt with as quickly and effectively as possible so they don't impact our other residents and the wider communities."

• Sovereign Housing officer Maryanne Yesil and Police Constable Chris Brindley, who worked together to tackle the case (Picture courtesy of Sovereign Housing Association)

After the first complaints the woman refused support, changed her phone number, and ignored letters from Sovereign.

She was given a tenancy caution, to which she agreed.

The caution listed the kinds of unacceptable behaviour but she broke the terms and was given a Section 21 notice in October 2013, which ordered her to move out.

But the woman refused to leave the bedsit.

Sovereign launched legal proceedings in January and an eviction notice was granted by Basingstoke County Court.

Ms Yesil added: "It's really important for us to try and help our residents; we have all sorts of advice and support programs in place but without the residents cooperation there's very little we can do."

News Bites

Hospital awards

NURSES, midwives and therapists from Hampshire's three hospitals will be celebrated at an awards evening in Hook on Monday.

The Hampshire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust Director of Nursing Awards will be presented from 7pm at the Elvetham Hotel, in Fleet Road, Hartley Wintney.

They recognise the dedication, care and compassion nursing, midwifery and therapy staff provide to patients at Basingstoke and North Hampshire Hospital, Royal Hampshire County Hospital in Winchester and Andover War Memorial Hospital.

More that 250 nominations have been made for the awards.

D-Day concert

HAMPSHIRE County Council's music service is presenting a 1940s-themed concert on Saturday to remember the 70th anniversary of D-Day.

The 7.30pm concert at Bay House School in Gosport will honour troops who left for World War Two from Hampshire.

Hampshire County Council's executive member for education, Peter Edgar, said: "I am thrilled that we are celebrating the 70th anniversary of this momentous day with a concert at one of Gosport's schools, it plays tribute not only to troops that left our shores during the Second World War but also to those who continue to serve overseas today."

Tickets are £5 available from Bay House School and Gosport Tourist Information Centre.

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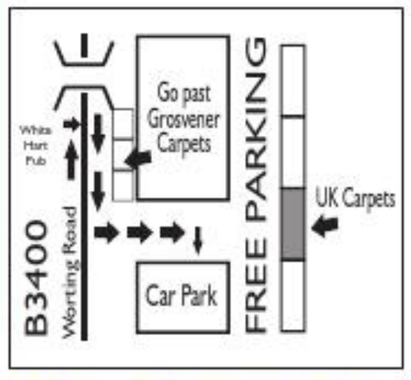

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News Bites

Alton meeting

ALTON Town Council will be deciding on its comments on plans for 600 homes south of the town on Thursday, June 19.

The meeting, which had been set for Tuesday, June 3, has been postponed two weeks.

The meeting starts at Alton Assembly Rooms in High Street from 7pm.

Tadley talks

REQUESTS for grants by Age Concern and Hurst Community College are among items to be discussed at Tadley Town Council's next meeting on Monday.

The Finance and General Purposes Committee meeting is set to start at the town council's offices in Franklin Avenue, Tadley, from 7.30pm.

Valuables stolen

A COLLECTION of Pewter goblets were among the valuables burgled from an Alton home.

Thieves broke in through a window of the house in River Hill, Binstead, between 7.45am and 4.05pm on May 27.

Platinum diamond earrings, a diamond solitaire necklace, 15 pieces of Pewter, a Canon camera, and Black Ibanez guitar were stolen in the raid.

Six Arthurian legend goblets, and one Gandolf style goblet, one Galadriel goblet were among the Pewter items stolen.

Details of the burglary were released by police on Tuesday.

Anyone with information is asked to call police on 101.

Girl wins town's kite competition

By **Katriona Ormiston**
news@basingstokeobserver.co.uk

• Ava Meads with her parents Sean and Lisa

A FIVE-YEAR-OLD from Old Basing is flying high after her kite design won a Basingstoke Kite Festival competition.

Ava Meads, who goes to Old Basing Infants School, designed a butterfly kite with multi-coloured wings in her favourite colours.

Mayor of Basingstoke Roger Gardiner is presenting Ava with a prize at the Basingtoke Kite Festival at Down Grange Sport Complex in Pack Lane on Sunday.

She won the wildlife-themed key stage one competition.

Dad Sean Meads said: "She sat down one weekend and did several designs one after the other, it took her all weekend.

"There were about 10 by the end of it, we were quite surprised when we saw what she'd done, and we posted off her favourite."

He said she was determined to enter the contest because she loves wildlife and kites.

Mr Meads and wife Lisa, from Basingfield Close, take Ava to Black Dam Nature Reserve to fly her own kite.

Ava said: "It is fantastic. It was a butterfly with pink and orange and yellow and purple and violet.

"I like bees, birds and frogs.

"But I like butterflies because they have wings that are really colourful and they have camouflage so other animals can't eat them."

Mr Meads added: "We're really proud of her and really shocked to get the letter saying 'first prize', it is incredible.

"It is probably the same feeling other parents get when their children are in the Olympics.

"She's really excited about Sunday. She keeps on asking, 'when am I going to meet the mayor? When am I going to meet the mayor?'"

This year is Basingstoke Kite Festival's 22nd year.

It runs from 10am until 5pm on Saturday and Sunday and runs activities including kite-flying demonstrations, displays and kite making workshops.

PCC sets out rehab proposals

HAMPSHIRE'S Police and Crime Commissioner has set out six recommendations on ways to reduce re-offending to the Government.

The proposals were published on Sunday as a White Paper calling for them to be included in the Government's reform of the system.

They were revealed on the same day a new Government agenda called Transforming Rehabilitation came into force.

The new agenda, which launched on Sunday, includes a new public sector National Probation Service for high-risk offenders, forming 21 new community rehabilitation companies for medium and low-risk offenders, and measures to give supervision and rehab in the community to every offender released from custody.

Commissioner Simon Hayes said: "I have previously expressed major concerns about the Government's Transforming Rehabilitation agenda because of the indecent haste with which it was introduced and the risk posed by introducing profit into the criminal justice system.

He added: "With UK prisons beyond full capacity, the Winchester Conference White Paper calls for fresh and innovative approaches to rehabilitation to reduce re-offending."

Steve Brine MP, who sits on the Justice Select Committee, will be presenting the White Paper to the Committee.

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News Bites

Volunteer Week

HAMPSHIRE'S Fire and Rescue Service is thanking its volunteers helping keep the county safe.

The message comes during national Volunteers' Week this week.

Fire and Rescue prevention area manager, Stew Adamson, said: "Volunteers are an integral part of society, they help deliver our services in the most effective way, making life safer for our community."

Volunteers carry out home safety visits, help as actors in training exercises, and fix and maintain the service's vehicles.

Town charities

RESIDENTS in Tadley are being asked to vote for a charity for the town's Sainsbury's to support.

A shortlist of three will be chosen before a charity is picked by the Mulfords Hill store in July.

They will be supported by the supermarket for one year.

Vote at sainsburys.co.uk/localcharity.

Photo contest

WILDLIFE photography fans across Hampshire can enter their photos for a prize in a county-wide competition.

The competition by Owslebury-based zoo Marwell Wildlife, near Winchester, has launched for its fifth year.

The five categories are native wildlife, cute and funny, Marwell residents, and Marwell's endangered animals.

The deadline for entries is August 31. To enter go to marwell.org.uk/photocomp.

Launch of cancer centre campaign

By **Katriona Ormiston**
news@basingstokeobserver.co.uk

STAFF at Festival Place shopping centre have launched a bid to raise £10,000 towards a new £13m cancer centre.

The team raised more than £200 during the start of their 1,091-mile run, cycle and row challenge on Saturday, May 24.

It was their first event launching a year-long campaign to raise £10,000 for the Ark Cancer Centre Charity.

The charity has pledged to raise £5m of the £13m needed for a new cancer centre for North Hampshire – at a site to be confirmed.

Over the next six months staff have pledged to run, cycle and row 1,091 miles as part of the effort on static machines in the shopping centre.

It is the distance to and from Basingstoke's three twin cities of Alençon in France, Euskirchen in Germany, and Braine-l'Alleud in Belgium.

Duty assistant at Festival Place, Sean Taylor, was among the 10-strong team that clocked up 116 miles from 11am until 3pm.

The 30-year-old from Andover said: "Everyone got stuck in and got the atmosphere going.

· Staff at Festival Place shopping centre launching the campaign

"I have had a lot of family experiences with cancer which helped push me and I've seen the plans for the new centre.

"There is a lot of travelling involved to get all the treatment you need when you have cancer so it will make life a lot easier for people who are suffering from it for the facilities to be nearer."

The next stint will take place on June 21 from 5pm until 8pm.

Volunteers are also collecting donations throughout the Basingstoke Festival, running a half-marathon, and running the Brackenwood Festival 5km race on July 20.

Charity manager at the Ark Cancer Centre, Vickie Randall, said: "We are absolutely delighted to have the opportunity to work with Festival Place as its charity partner over the next year.

"This will make a huge difference to our project – we're all about providing cancer care to local cancer sufferers and couldn't wish for a better partner to help promote our cause and raise money."

An interim radiotherapy unit is due to open at Basingstoke hospital in the next few weeks.

The unit will run at the Aldermaston Road hospital while the new cancer centre is built - planned to open in 2016.

Drink-related crash figures published

LAST year 59 people were killed or seriously injured on Hampshire's road in drink-related crashes.

The figure means one in 17 people in serious accidents across the county involved someone who was over the limit – 56 people out of 1,031.

The figures came as Hampshire Police launched a campaign against drink driving on Monday.

Operations will run throughout the month as part of a nationwide effort.

Every driver in a crash will be breathalysed as part of the campaign.

Hampshire's head of roads policing, Superintendent Lucy Hutson, said: "Extra patrols will be out over the next few months carrying out a number of breath tests.

"Is it worth the risk? The answer is simple, no it isn't.

"After just four pints of lager, you may not be safe to drive for up to 13 hours, so whether you are drinking in the afternoon at a summer barbecue, drinking while you watch a World Cup football game or going out for a few drinks in the evening, make sure you are safe to drive. Just because you haven't had a drink for a few hours, it doesn't mean all the alcohol has left your system and you can drive, you are still likely to be over the limit."

Police are warning that a drink drive conviction could mean it is harder to buy a mortgage, travel, go to college or university, or get a job.

Advertorial

A new Basingstoke Barber Shop opened 2nd June 2014.

The Barber Shop is inside Fitness First which is located in the Chineham Business Park on Stag Oak Lane. Offering traditional old school barbering as well as the more up to date fashionable trends, The Barber Shop has an eye for detail and a passion for men's grooming. The team of barbers are accredited by the British Barber Association and are highly trained to a NVQ Level 2 & 3 standard with on-going training in all techniques from short back and sides, grading, skin fades and patterns. If you require a more structured style they are happy to accommodate your needs no matter how big or small and with the Jack Dean homecare range, they're always on hand to care for your hair. Their skills are perfectly honed with all the new trends as well as the time honoured traditions that many new barber shops fail to offer. The cut throat shaving experience is where you can sit back and relax while the trained professionals look after you. A hot towel is applied to the face; this opens the skins pores and softens the beard. Before the towel cools, shaving cream is applied using a badger hair shaving brush, a fresh blade is used for every person for when the shave is carried out. There is a specialised men's shaving range which is applied as aftercare once your shave is complete leaving you feeling fresh and clean.

The Barber Shop understands that today's man needs to be flexible so to fit into your busy lifestyle they are open from 7am till 8pm through the week, 8.30am – 5pm Saturdays and Sundays 10am – 4pm. At Fitness First there is plenty of free parking for your convenience which is right outside the front doors and all non-gym members are welcome. The Barber Shop is a walk in appointment salon so you can pop along at any time for that quick trim and tidy, alternatively you can call and book a time slot that suits you. Why not treat yourself or a loved one to a grooming experience that is friendly, fun and full of banter without losing that professional barber image. Call 07999408842 for more information, visit their website: www.basingstokebarber.com or find them on Facebook: Basingstoke Barbershop.

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News Bites

A big thank-you

VOLUNTEERS at Basingstoke hospital are being celebrated with tea parties for Volunteer Week this week.

The volunteers at Basingstoke and North Hampshire Hospital in Aldermaston Road spend on average three hours a week helping out.

They visit patients, do administration work, support staff and run exercise classes.

Hampshire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust Chief Executive Mary Edwards said: "We are extremely grateful to all of our volunteers for the difference they make to patients."

She added: "These tea parties are a small way of saying thank you."

New walkway

A NEW remembrance walkway is being unveiled at a pet crematorium near Hook on Monday.

Dignity Pet Crematorium, off Odiham Road, Winchfield, is hosting the opening alongside an open day from 10am until 4pm.

The crematorium is the final resting place of more than 6,000 pets from budgies to Great Danes.

DJ competition

DJS across Basingstoke have a chance to win a national competition launched by Spanish tapas restaurant La Tasca.

The restaurant, in Festival Place, is searching for the town's talented DJs who can mix in Latin music.

To enter, upload a 20-minute set to fiesta-nightsdj.com by June 30.

New council chairman elected for Hampshire

THE new Chairman of Hampshire County Council has said he is 'humbled and proud' to represent the county.

By **Katriona Ormiston**
news@basingstokeobserver.co.uk

Colin Davidovitz was elected on Friday as civic and ceremonial head of Hampshire by fellow councilors at the annual meeting.

He took over the chain of office from Ken Thornber.

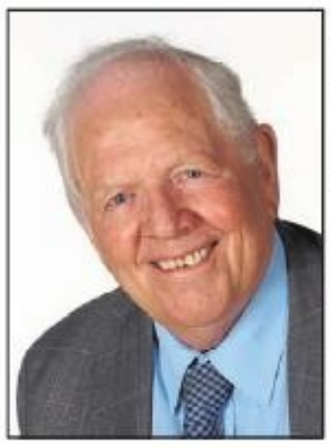
He said: "I feel humbled but very proud to have been considered and elected for this great task.

"Hampshire is a fine county. It hosts many of the UK's most important manufacturers and businesses as well as bases for all our excellent armed forces.

"In the year ahead we will be commemorating the anniversaries of their historic and heroic actions."

He has chosen to support soldiers', sailors' and airmen's family charity SSAFA for the year.

His year will see the nation commemorate 100 years since the start of the First World War, and 70 years since D-Day this weekend.



Cllr Davidovitz, a county councillor for Chandler's Ford for 13 years, is former executive member for communications and efficiency.

He joined the Royal Navy at the age of 15 as a boy telegraphist where he later qualified as a Russian linguist and electronic warfare specialist.

He was awarded a British Empire Medal for 'outstanding zeal and devotion to duty on naval intelligence' after a single-handed mission in Korea in 1952.

At 25 he left the Royal Navy to start a new career as an electronic engineer at the start of Independent Television and took part, first in the opening of the London ITV service, then the Scottish and Southern ITV services.

He was elected to the county council in 2001.

Former executive member for economic development Jonathan Glen has been appointed Vice Chairman of Hampshire County Council.

Teenager picked to visit top USA uni

A TALENTED Alton College teenager has been picked out of 2,000 people to visit top Yale University for a week-long summer programme.

Rachael Murtagh, 17, will visit the Ivy League university from August 5 to 12 for a taste in higher education in the States.

The first-year student from Long Sutton also won a national engineering competition for girls with project about space satellites earlier this year.

She exhibited her work to thousands of people at Birmingham's Big Bang Fair for young scientists in March this year.

Rachael said: "I'm really excited about this opportunity to visit Yale and gain a taste of uni life in America.

She added: "It will be my first time in America and I'm looking forward to exploring another culture - which includes trying corn dogs - and seeing first hand if it's the place for me."

Alton College ambassador and head of Gatwick Airport engineering, Dawn Elson, said: 'It's so refreshing to see such technical talent and enthusiasm in Rachael.

"Young students and girls in particular, are not aware of the wide ranging possibilities for future careers that can spring from taking Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths subjects.

"We need to get the message out there and Rachael's amazing achievement is definitely playing its part in supporting that campaign."

Rachael, who studies Physics, Maths, Further Maths, Chemistry and German, will be given tips on how to get in to some of the world's best universities.

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Blockbuster role for former RAF airfield

AN ARMY base near Whitchurch hit cinema screens on Friday as a backdrop to Tom Cruise's latest multi-million pound action blockbuster.

The former military training area in Barton Stacey became a battleground again in Edge of Tomorrow, starring Cruise alongside Emily Blunt.

Film crews set up camp at the base for two and a half weeks in November and December, 2012.

The alien invasion movie was released in the UK on Friday.

By **Katriona Ormiston**
news@basingstokeobserver.co.uk

About £544,000 was spent in the area while filming.

It was organised by Hampshire County Council's Film Hampshire campaign, promoting the county as a top film location.

The county also boasts Les Misérables, James Bond's Skyfall, The Da Vinci Code and Downton Abbey among its archives.

Councillor Seán Woodward, Hampshire County Council's executive member for economy, transport and environment, said: "Once again, Hampshire has been the setting for another big-budget film.

"Film Hampshire plays a significant role in attracting investment and tourism to Hampshire which is great for the local economy.

"By promoting Hampshire locations to film makers we can increase opportunities for local businesses while the cast and crew are here, as well as support tourism from film-lovers visiting famous movie locations.

"The tourism sector plays a vital role in our local economy, generating well over £3billion each year and providing more than 60,000 jobs."

Other films shot near Basingstoke:

The Monuments Men, released February starring George Clooney and Matt Damon, was shot in Bramley.

Rush, released 2013, was shot at Blackbushe Airport in Yately, east of Basingstoke.

Becoming Jane, 2007, was shot in Jane Austen's home village Chawton.

War Horse, 2011, was shot at country house Stratfield Saye, north-east of Basingstoke. It was the location for the cavalry scenes.

Emma, 1996 starring Gwyneth Paltrow, also shot at Stratfield Saye's dining room.

35 years of French twinning

WHITCHURCH celebrated 35 years of links with their French twin town last month.

Families from Whitchurch and its neighbouring villages hosted about 30 French compatriots from Neuvic sur L'Isle, near Bordeaux from May 6 to 11.

The visitors were greeted at Barton Stacey Village Hall with a cream tea reception before touring nearby parts of the county.

They visited Whitchurch Silk Mill, the oldest silk mill in the UK still in its original building, and toured Laverstoke Park Farm, which is owned by former racing driver Jody Scheckter, where they came face-to-face with buffalo.

Chairman of the Testbourne Parishes Twinning Association, Colin Follett, said: "We all enjoyed ourselves.

"It has been going a long time now so some people have known each other for 35 years – there are a lot of people who helped form the association.

"Laverstoke Park Farm was one of the highlights although it was wet and cold that brought everyone together a bit more."

The visit culminated at Testbourne Community School with a celebration meal of local produce including smoked trout from Chilbolton and roast lamb from Northington.

Original members of the twinning of 35 years standing were recognised for their continued association and gathered for a group photo.

Twinning between the Testbourne Parishes and Neuvic sur L'Isle was launched in 1979.

The association is appealing for anyone who lives in Testbourne Parishes interested in in connecting and hosting a French family to join the group.

The Testbourne Parishes Twinning Association also launched a new website at testbournetwinning.org.net.

News Bites

PCC meeting

HAMPSHIRE'S Police and Crime Commissioner is hosting a meeting to question confidence in the police on Tuesday.

Commissioner Simon Hayes is holding the Hampshire Constabulary police force to account for the public at Winchester Guildhall in High Street from 10am.

He will question Chief Constable of Hampshire Constabulary Andy Marsh on issues people have asked of him.

He said: "At this time of heightened anxiety around policing nationally, I will be seeking assurances from Chief Constable Andy Marsh that the public can trust Hampshire Constabulary."

The meeting is open to the public and will be recorded to go up on the commissioner's website on June 12.

To register your interest and reserve a place to attend, call 01962 871595 or email opcc@hampshire.pnn.police.uk.

Have you won?

ST Michael's Hospice has announced the winners of its latest lottery draw from May 30.

First prize of £1,000 goes to ticket 24790 of Basingstoke, while ticket 20258 of Basingstoke claims second prize of £100.

Third prize of £50 goes to Basingstoke ticket 86348, and Basingstoke ticket 27840 gets fourth prize of £20.

Sixteen prizes of £5 go to tickets 05812, 11597, 40462, 43723, 61547, 61910, 62724, 65573, 69330, 73576, 80648, 83640, 84053, 86055, 88195 and 95163.

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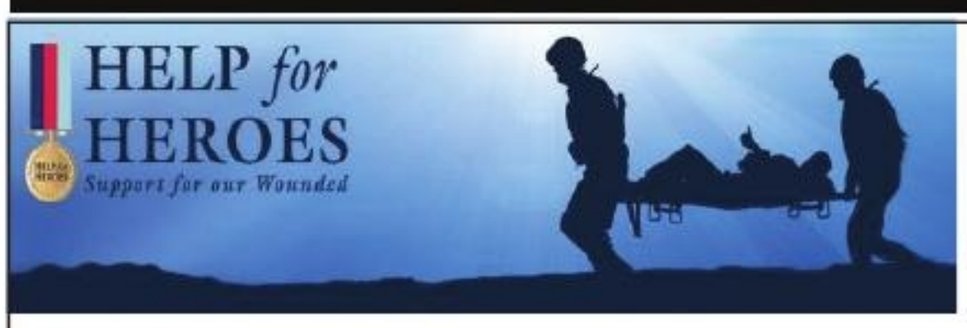

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• *The stage show of Angelina Ballerina comes to Basingstoke. See overleaf.*

Angelina is in town!

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Open mic night

CENTRAL Studio hosts its latest Open Mic Night tomorrow, giving local musicians a chance to perform in front of a live audience.

Everyone is welcome for the free show.

It starts at 7.30pm. Email paul.philipson@qmc.ac.uk to take part, or turn up on the night to listen.

Blues show

ANGELA Brown and The Mighty 45s come to the Basingstoke Blues Club on Saturday, with their rendition of American blues singer Willy Dixon's songs.

It is followed next Friday with the club's regular jam session, where musicians of all abilities can turn up and perform.

Doors open at 7.30pm for Saturday's show at the Moose Centre, on Churchill Way. Go to basingstokebluesclub.co.uk for more details.

Duo perform

HAT Fitz and Cara perform their unique blend of music at The Forge this evening.

Australian blues musician Hat teams up with Cara, who sings and plays the washboards, flute and tin whistle in new album 'Wiley Ways'.

It starts at 8pm, and more details can be found at anvilarts.org.uk.

Mice take Anvil stage

ANGELINA Ballerina pirouettes onto The Anvil stage next week with a brand new stage show for children.

By **Adam Flinn**
adam@taylornewspapers.co.uk

Full of music and singing, The Mousical sees Angelina and her friends given the chance to appear in their favourite TV programme 'Dancing With Mice'.

But they struggle to decide what to perform as everyone has a mix of ideas for the show, and it's up to Angelina to make sure that everything goes ahead smoothly.

"The response has been brilliant," writer and director Miranda Larson said.

"Most importantly for me is what the children think of it, and I'm always amazed that children manage to dance in the aisles while following the story.

"I think we're all really proud of what it's achieved so far, and hopefully we will achieve a bit more yet."

The stage show is based off the latest Angelina Ballerina television series, and still draws inspiration from the books as well.

Angelina has proven popular since she was first created by author Katharine Holabird in the 1980s, with the latest series of the television show featuring 40 episodes.

Speaking about the show's popularity, Miranda added: "The age of the characters on screen is seven-years-old, so for that younger audience, it's aspirational but at the same time going through things the children go through.

"But in the backdrop of that, it's also about expressing yourself, hard work, and having a go.

"This show's not just ballet either, we've got a lot of contemporary styles as well, including jazz, tap and hip hop as well as the ballet.

"We always invite the audience to get up and dance along with the cast, and just have fun really."

The first show takes at 4pm next Friday, with further performances on June 14 and 15. For more details or to book tickets, go to anvilarts.org.uk.

• Angelina Ballerina comes to Basingstoke next week (Picture by Greer Versteeg)

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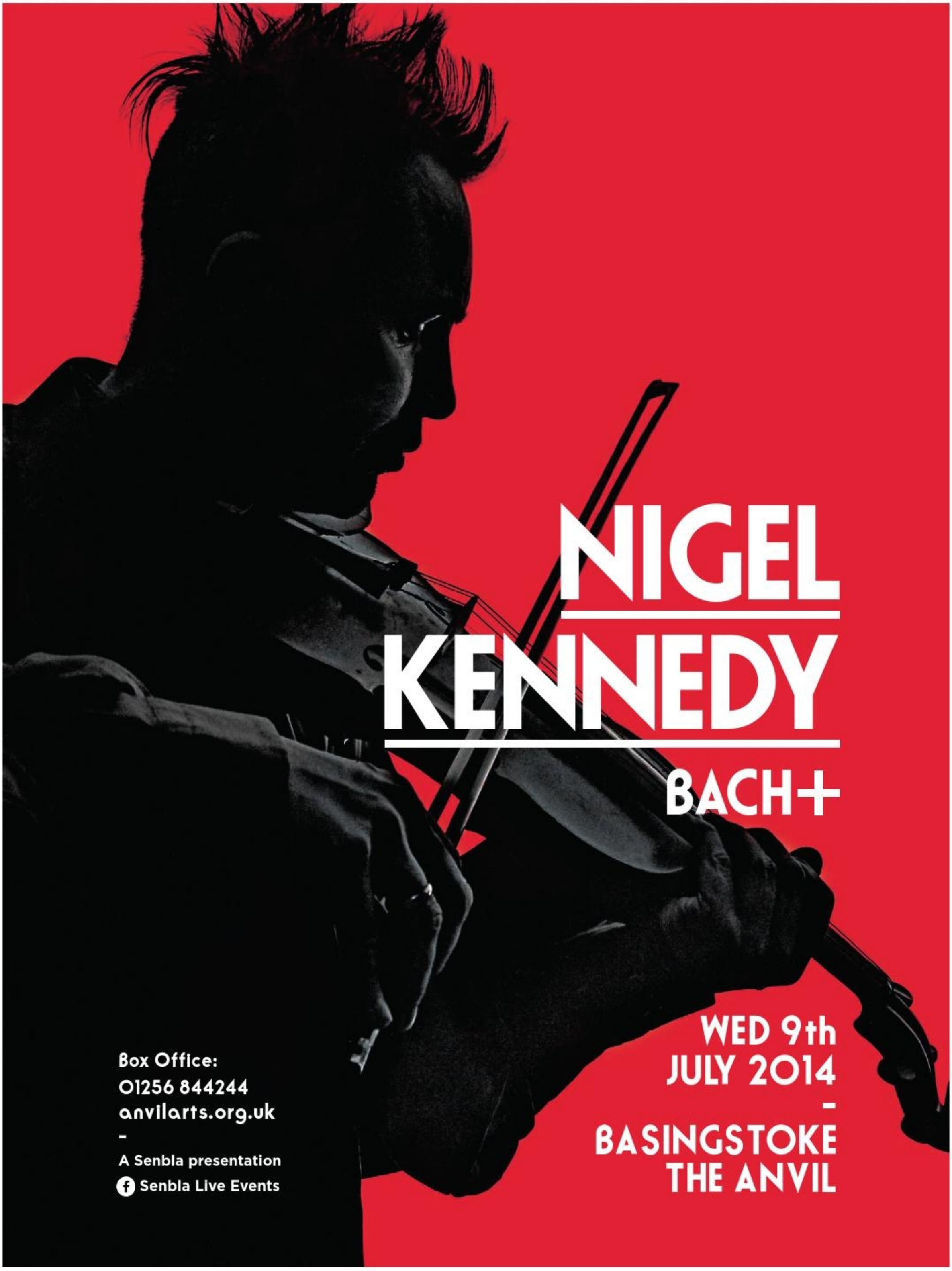
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Jazz ensemble

JAZZ musician Andy Dickens brings his trumpet and flugelhorn skills to Central Studio on Saturday.

He is joined by Craig Milverton on piano, Julian Marc Stringle on clarinet and saxophone, Brett Neville on string bass and Rod Brown on drums for the performance at 8pm.

For more information, go to centralstudio.co.uk.

Load of laughs

GEOFF Boyz, Lou Sanders and Paul Ricketts are the line-up for this months Comedy Club, taking place at the Bordon Phoenix this evening.

Lou has written for Channel 4's 'Stand Up For The Week', Geoff was one of the first comics to perform in China, while Paul has been doing stand-up for almost 10 years.

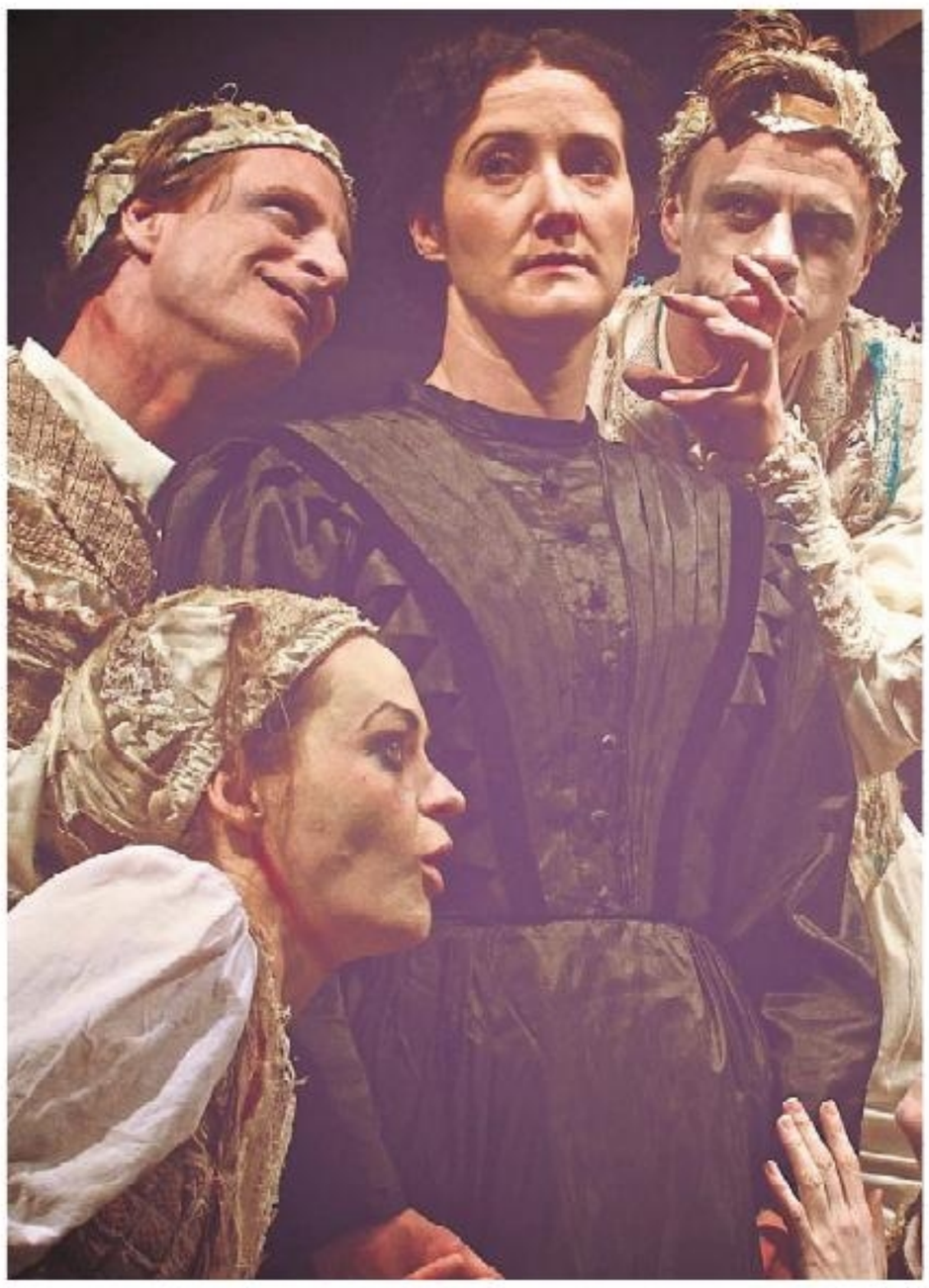
It starts at 8pm, and tickets can be booked at phoenixarts.co.uk.

Strictly's singer

STRICTLY Come Dancing's lead singer Chris Madin pays tribute to The Beach Boys in his new show Surfin' USA at The Haymarket on Saturday at 7.30pm.

The Beach Boys have sold more than 100 million records in their illustrious career.

For more information, go to anvilarts.org.uk.



Staging the last hanging

THE story of Martha Brown, the last woman to be publicly hanged in Dorset in the mid-19th century, is told at The Haymarket next Wednesday.

By **Adam Flinn**
adam@taylornewspapers.co.uk

Set in 1856, The Ballad of Martha Brown is a tale of an ordinary woman and her husband, and a hatchet grabbed in haste that leads to murder.

Based in rural Dorset, the show was put together by Angel Exit Theatre using various accounts of the story.

Tamsin Fessey, the company's co-artistic director, said the show had been inspired by a book she read aged 16 called My Name is Martha Brown.

"I remember reading this story, and just imagining this woman and what her life would have been like," said Tamsin.

"There's a lot of relevant things in the story even today, like she's the victim of domestic abuse, so we did quite a lot of research into that.

"The company's based in Dorset as well, so we wanted to tell a Dorset story."

A gang of storytellers describe proceedings to the audience, and despite the serious topic, the show uses a wicked sense of humour throughout.

The show began touring at the beginning of May, and has so far received a positive reaction from everywhere it has been.

"I think a lot of people have been surprised by how funny it's been," Tamsin added.

"You hear a story about the last woman to be hanged, so you're not expecting a barrel of laughs but that's something we are pleased with, that we've kept it entertaining, and the light touches are what bring out the darkness in the end.

"Without the light touches you wouldn't really find that darkness."

Wednesday's show begins at 7.30pm, and tickets cost £15. For more information or to book, go to anvilarts.org.uk or call the box office on 01256 844244.

• Martha Brown's tragic story is told at The Haymarket next week

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5 Jun 2014, 8pm
The Forge
HAT FITZ & CARA
Hat Fitz is a veteran wild man of the blues scene in Australia. Cara has a sensational voice and also plays washboards, flute and tin whistle, sometimes all at once.
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5 Jun 2014, 7:45pm
The Anvil
THE COUNTERFEIT STONES LET'S PRETEND THE NIGHT TOGETHER
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6 Jun 2014, 7:30pm
Central Studio, Queen Mary's College
ACOUSTIC OPEN MIC NIGHT
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6 Jun 2014, 10am - 1pm
The Cross House, Silchester Rd., Bramley
DISCOVER YOUR PASSIONS (WORKSHOP)
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-Find out the one secret that guarantees a passionate, successful life.
-Open your heart and mind to your ideal life and stop settling for less than you truly desire or deserve.
***Space is limited! Advanced Booking Required"
http://affirmativethought.com/upcoming-workshops-events/

6 Jun 2014, 7:45pm
The Anvil
PHILHARMONIA ORCHESTRA
The evening begins Richard Strauss' Four Last Songs which sums up his lifelong love of the soprano voice in music of rare and heartwarming beauty. Few compositions come close to its autumnal peace, best shown in its final movement, 'Im Abendrot', which portrays an ageing couple watching the setting sun, closing their eyes. The final pieces the composer wrote, Four Last Songs also have a special place in Philharmonia history, as the orchestra gave the world première of the work in 1950.
01256 844244 www.anvilarts.org.uk

7 Jun 2014, 8pm
Central Studio, Queen Mary's College
THE ANDY DICKENS BAND
"£15 full | £14 concessions | £12 students & children
With Andy Dickens on trumpet & flugelhorn, Craig Milverton on piano, Julian Marc Stringle on clarinet and sax, Brett Neville on string bass, and Rod Brown on drums.
www.centralstudio.co.uk

7 Jun 2014, 8pm
The Moose Centre, Churchill Way, Basingstoke
ANGELA BROWN (USA) AND THE MIGHTY 45S
www.basingstokebluesclub.co.uk

11 Jun 2014 - 11 Jun 2014, 7:30pm - 10:30pm
Chapel Arts Centre
PIERRE BENSUSAN - 40TH ANNIVERSARY WORLD TOUR
Living up to a reputation as the "Mozart of Guitar" has taken award winning French-Algerian musician Pierre Bensusan (www.pierrebensusan.com) on an uncompromising journey across the globe. Over the past 40 years Pierre has been a regular visitor to the UK. His celebratory 40th Anniversary tour, in partnership with Lowden Guitars arrives in Bath on 11th June 2014 with a performance at the Chapel Arts Centre. For ticket details please go to http://www.chapelarts.org/
www.pierrebensusan.com

12 Jun 2014 - 14 Jun 2014
The Haymarket
LADIES IN RETIREMENT
"Directed by Ian Dickens and starring a fantastic cast with well-known actors from stage and screen, this taut, creepy melodrama, based on a famous murder which actually took place at the end of the last century, has become one of the most successful and most frequently performed plays in the modern repertoire.
Set in the 1880s, Ladies in Retirement guarantees an evening of Victorian thrills and suspense."
01256 844244 www.anvilarts.org.uk

13 Jun 2014 - 15 Jun 2014
The Anvil
ANGELINA BALLERINA THE MOUSICAL
Angelina and her friends think their dreams have come true when Camembert Academy wins the opportunity to appear in their favourite television programme 'Dancing With Mice!'. But when the girls and boys have very different ideas for the show and just can't seem to agree on anything, it's up to Angelina as Dance Captain to ensure that the show goes ahead.
01256 844244 www.anvilarts.org.uk

14 Jun 2014, 7pm - 11:30pm
Red Lion Hotel, Basingstoke
PRINCE AND PRINCESS CHARITY DISCO
"Charity disco to help raise money for local school Dove House,
This is a family disco you will be meet and greet by a prince and princess.
Tickets are available at £10 per adult, children under 18 £5 and children with autism go free. There will be food of burgers, hotdogs, chips and salad and the disco will be autism friendly ."
7414915288

14 Jun 2014, 7pm - 11pm
Red lion hotel Basingstoke
CHILDREN'S CHARITY DISCO
"In aid of Dove House School, charity disco inc meet and greet by prince and princess, disco, face painting, Buffett
Ticket prices are £10 per adult, children go free.
Great family night out."
07414915288

14 Jun 2014, 8pm
Central Studio, Queen Mary's College
FUNKLINE
"£12 full | £10 concessions | £8 students & children
Funkline will have you dancing and singing along to the best dance floor fillers of the past decades! "
www.centralstudio.co.uk

14 Jun 2014, 11am
Central Studio, Queen Mary's College
YUMMM!
"£6 full | £5 children
A dance theatre show that celebrates all that is messy at meal times!
Crunchy, sweet, tart, gooey, runny, sour, thick, yummy!
Yummm! is a celebration of food seen through children's eyes using dance, live music, quirky design & someamusing eating utensils."
www.centralstudio.co.uk

14 Jun 2014, 12:15pm - 6pm
Sherfield on Loddon village green
SHERFIELD ON LODDON FETE
Sherfield's annual fete is a great occasion for all the family. Super attractions include British Legion Corps of Drums, Falconry Display, Comtois Heavy Horses display and dray rides, Morris dancing, Craft and Food Marquee, Exemption Dog Show, 'Rockin on the Green' with Stone Gecko and Frottage, BBQ, Hog Roast, Beer and Tea Tents, traditional stalls and games, inflatables, children's races and more.
www.sherfieldfete.org.uk

14 Jun 2014, 11:30am - 3:30pm
Stratton Park, Basingstoke
PICNIC IN THE PARK
"Family friendly free community fun day. Bring a picnic and enjoy the stalls, activities and displays on offer. For more information, http://friendsofstrattonpark.org.uk
friendsofstrattonpark.org.uk18 Jun 2014, 8pm
The Haymarket
Josh Widdicombe Incidentally
Suitable for ages 16 and over.
01256 844244 www.anvilarts.org.uk

28 Jun 2014, 11am
Central Studio, Queen Mary's College
THE SORCERER'S APPRENTICE
"£6 full | £5 children
Take one castle, one broom and one book of sorcery. Add a boy with the tingle of magic in his fingertips and a spell that spirals out of control..... Garlic Theatre conjures a bewitching tale, full of mystery and enchantment, with its blend of physical theatre, humour and technical wizardry. Puppets, mime and a dash of real magic will leave adults and children enthralled."
www.centralstudio.co.uk

28 Jun 2014, 8pm
Central Studio, Queen Mary's College
THUNDERSTRUCK – ACDC TRIBUTE SHOW
"£10 full | £8 concessions | £8 students & children
An evening of AC/DC hits with classics spanning the 35+ year career of the ultimate Rock n Roll Band. Using the same equipment and instruments as the masters themselves, this tribute band present an all action stage show, spanning High Voltage through to Black Ice, as the continuing legacy of Angus, Malcolm Young, Bon Scott and Brian Johnson is given due reverence - close your eyes, imagine you're at Wembley Stadium and let there be rock, you'll soon be on the Highway To Hell."
www.centralstudio.co.uk

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Sudoku

Place a number from 1 to 9 in each empty cell so that each 3x3 block, column, and full row includes each of the numbers from 1 to 9 only once. **EASY/MEDIUM/HARD**

4					8	2		5
	3		2	1		4		
	7	6	3					9
				9	6	1	5	4
		8				7		
9	1	4	5	3				
3					5	9	6	
		7		6	2		8	
1		9	7					2

6	4							7
				6	5		8	
9	1				7			3
	2				4			
	9	7				2	1	
			7				3	
2			4				6	1
	5		6	7				
7							5	2

			2		8			1
4		5				7		
	1	3						
	6			9				
7			3		1			8
				6			9	
						5	6	
		8				3		4
1			9		5			

Two speed crossword

Quick Clues Across

4 Allow (6)
8 Transporter (7)
9 List of things to be done (6)
10 Afflict (9)
11 Halt (4)
13 Spirited horse (5)
14 Long loose overcoats (7)
16 Discourse (7)
18 Live piece of coal (5)
19 Crude metals (4)
21 Office of foreign power (9)
22 Crown (6)
23 Brown coal (7)
24 Settle comfortably (6)

Quick Clues Down

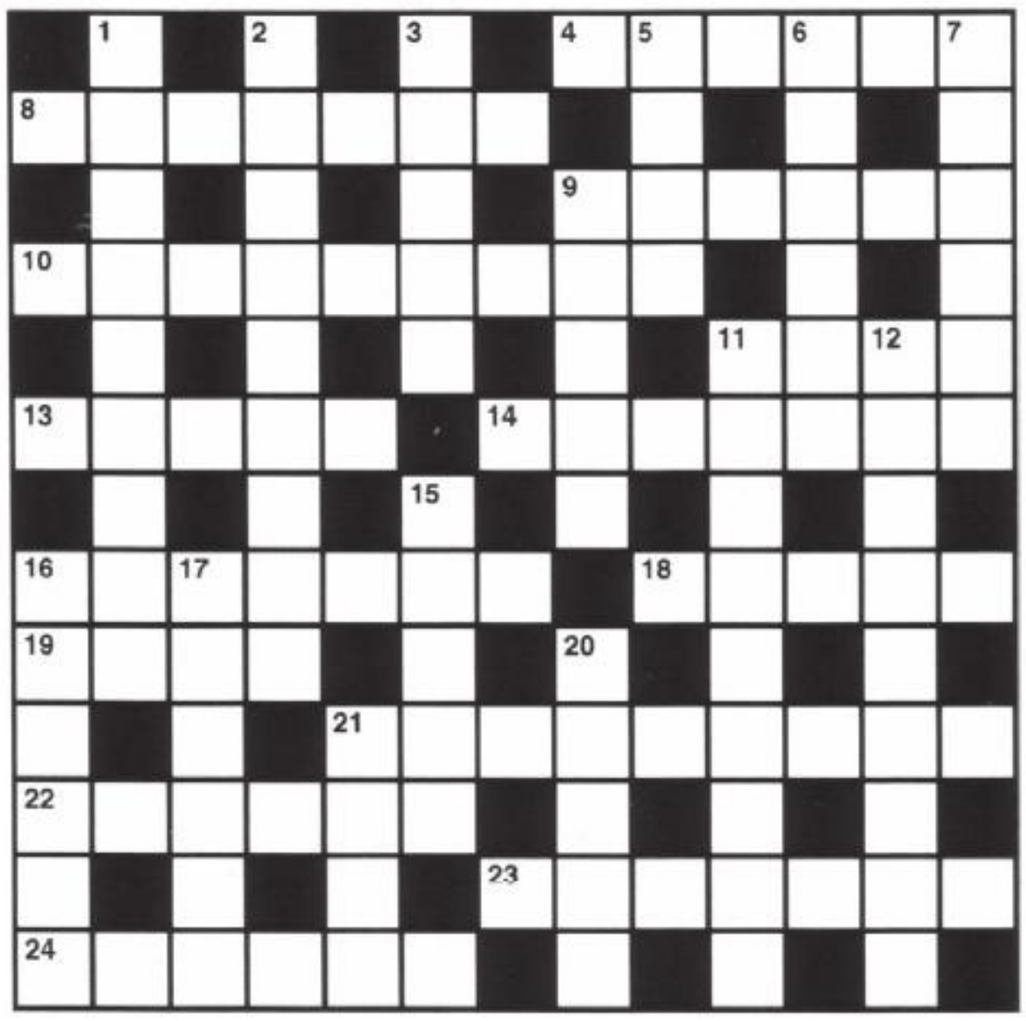
1 Geographical dictionary (9)
2 Expectations (9)
3 Blood-sucker (5)
5 Brink (4)
6 Small space of time (6)
7 Vagrants (6)
9 Coral island (5)
11 Pep pill (9)
12 Determine one's position (9)
15 Besom (5)
16 Capital city (6)
17 Conifers (6)
20 On the move (5)
21 Monk's room (4)

Cryptic Clues Across

4 Separate after the beginning of French leave? (6)
8 Ostentatious to mop up spilt soup (7)
9 Let man change in the mind (6)
10 Dramatic desire for city transport (6-3)
11 Was once a vegetable, it's said (4)
13 The old Englishman could be right (5)
14 Their work is certainly a grind (7)
16 Eaten up as ten different titbits (7)
18 A Spanish hero's likely to be sharp (5)
19 Produce a change of diet (4)
21 She'll put her money on an old sailor (9)
22 To be fastidious, put out the tin during the day (6)
23 Do they haunt the bar? (4)
24 Encouraging lays? (6)

Cryptic Clues Down

1 Foreshadowed an empty decanter? (9)
2 Pale plant has appeal (9)
3 Appropriate wear at the card table (5)
5 First lady has the right - always (4)
6 Former Prime Minister emerged from the battle, entirely unruffled (6)
7 Gnarled fingers lock among the shades (6)
9 Crazy to put the chap in charge (5)
11 The songster has the right to put in a dirty bid (9)
12 CID are up at the end to wipe out (9)
15 Likely to scratch? (5)
16 Tout one's wares - on foot? (6)
17 First class fish not in prime condition (6)
20 Overflow the eastern incline (5)
21 Shock could be the finish of 16 across (4)



Scribble space

Last week's solutions

8	3	7	4	6	5	9	2	1
1	5	6	2	3	9	7	4	8
9	2	4	7	1	8	3	5	6
2	4	1	6	8	3	5	9	7
3	9	8	5	7	2	1	6	4
6	7	5	1	9	4	8	3	2
4	1	2	3	5	7	6	8	9
7	8	3	9	4	6	2	1	5
5	6	9	8	2	1	4	7	3

1	4	9	8	2	3	6	5	7
6	5	7	1	4	9	8	2	3
8	2	3	6	5	7	1	4	9
4	9	8	2	3	6	5	7	1
2	3	6	5	7	1	4	9	8
5	7	1	4	9	8	2	3	6
3	6	5	7	1	4	9	8	2
9	8	2	3	6	5	7	1	4
7	1	4	9	8	2	3	6	5

7	9	6	3	5	4	2	8	1
5	8	4	7	1	2	6	3	9
3	2	1	9	6	8	7	4	5
4	1	8	2	9	6	5	7	3
2	5	3	4	8	7	1	9	6
9	6	7	1	3	5	4	2	8
1	7	5	8	2	9	3	6	4
6	4	9	5	7	3	8	1	2
8	3	2	6	4	1	9	5	7

Quick Crossword

Across: 1 Chowder 5 Bacon 8 Stir 9 Elegance 10 Architectural 13 Spur 14 Oval 17 Establishment 19 Reliance 20 Reed 21 Risen 22 Useless

Down: 2 Haters 3 Worship 4 Electoral 5 Bigot 6 Control 7 Needles 11 Cloisters 12 Clearer 13 Settles 15 Admiral 16 Angers 18 Brain

Cryptic Crossword

Across: 1 Abstain 5 Crest 8 Stab 9 Tabulate 10 Under pressure 13 Ruse 14 Edge 17 Interrogation 19 Derision 20 Emit 21 Eases 22 Message

Down: 2 Biting 3 Tableau 4 In top gear 5 Clubs 6 Erasure 7 Theseus 11 Emergence 12 Spindle 13 Retires 15 Gathers 16 Hoping 18 Rests

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The Woman in Black	4pm or 8pm	£47.50	£89.95	12 Dec 14
Thriller Live	7:30pm	£65	£89.95	26 Sept 14
We Will Rock You	7:30pm	£66.25	£99.95	04 Apr 14
Billy Elliot	7:30pm	£68.50	£109.95	12 Dec 14
I Can't Sing	7:30pm	£65	£109.95	24 Oct 14
Once	7:30pm	£69.50	£109.95	30 May 14
Phantom of the Opera	7:30pm	£65	£109.95	24 Oct 14
The Lion King	7:30pm	£65	£109.95	26 Sept 14
Mamma Mia!	7:45pm	£64	£109.95	24 Oct 14
War Horse	7:30pm	£62.50	£109.95	12 Dec 14
Wicked	7:30pm	£65	£139.95	31 Oct 14
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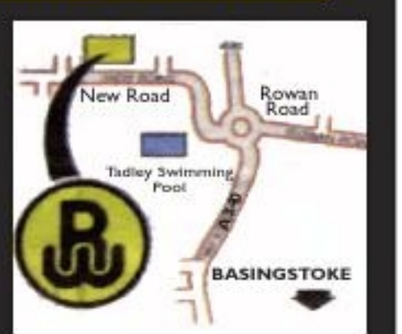

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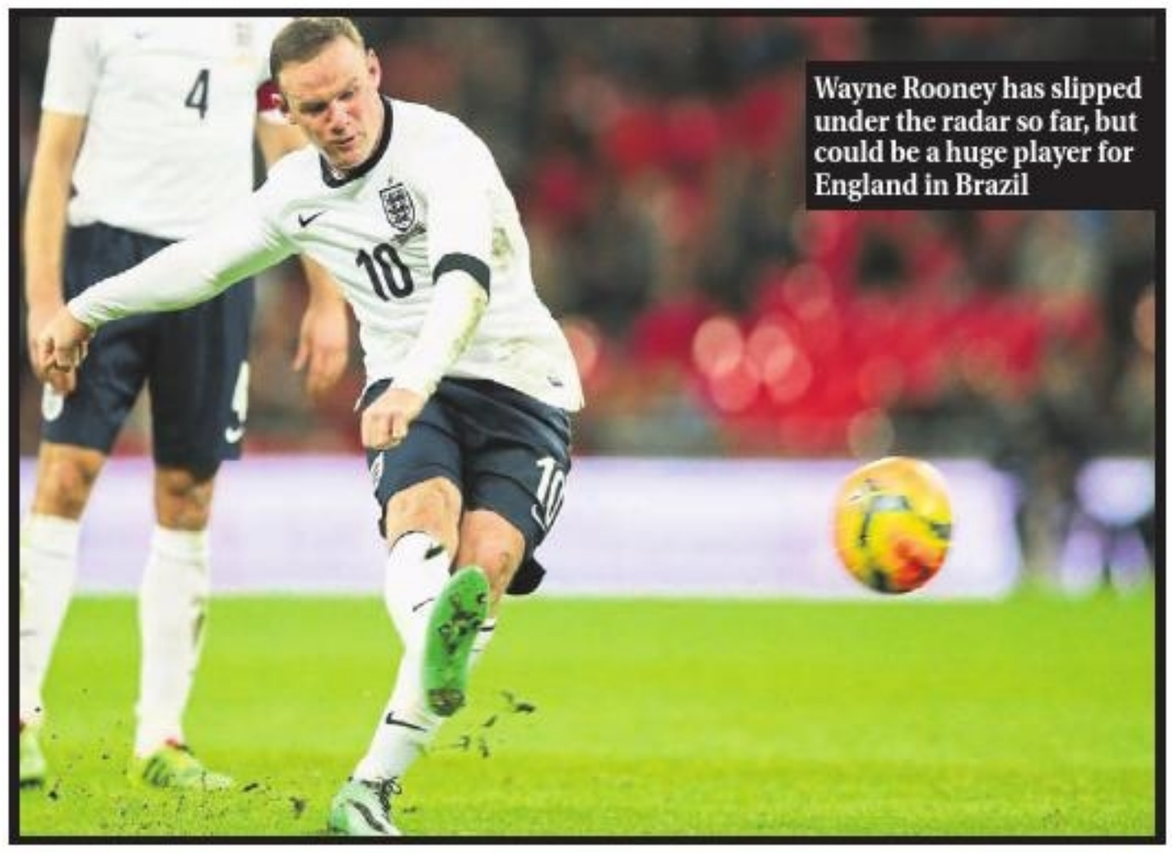
Wayne Rooney has slipped under the radar so far, but could be a huge player for England in Brazil

By Andrew McDermott

THE build-up to England's 2014 World Cup campaign certainly feels very different to previous tournaments.

Gone is the hype and pressure which has burdened previous squads. No longer does the nation expect a repeat of 1966; this time around there has been little discussion of what could lie in store should England reach the second round.

A tough group, containing World Cup heavyweights Italy and the attacking threat of Luis Suarez and his Uruguay team-mates, means there has arguably never been so little expected of an England team.

Instead, Brazil 2014 feels like a fresh start for the Three Lions. Gone – with the exception of Steven Gerrard and Frank Lampard – are the so-called 'golden generation' which turned out to be no better than those that had gone before.

The aforementioned duo add valuable experience to the squad, but it is the untried youngsters that have raised excitement levels.

It remains to be seen whether this World Cup is too soon for the likes of Ross Barkley, Luke Shaw and Raheem Sterling, but the fact that nine of the 20 outfield players selected by Roy Hodgson have 10 caps or less means they do not possess the scars of previous failures.

Success at Euro 2016 or the next World Cup seems a more realistic target, but Hodgson denies that Brazil is being used as a stepping stone along that path.

"We're not thinking about that, to be frank," he said. "The next World Cup is a long way off and this tournament means everything to us.

"Our focus is very much on this tournament and I refute any claims that some of these players have been selected because of 2016. They are selected because of 2014. I think they can do well but, of course, if when we're analysing what we got out of the tournament one of the things was that some of the players have grown up a little bit, got a bit more experience, then it will stand them in good stead for the future." In truth, the form and fitness of the players at his disposal meant Hodgson had little choice but to go with such a youthful squad. While Ashley Cole struggled to get regular football at Chelsea this season, 18-year-old Shaw was voted as the best left-back in the Premier League for his performances at Southampton, forcing Hodgson's hand. "It was a decision I had to take," conceded Hodgson after a selection call which resulted in Cole retiring from international football.

"Circumstances will prove whether the decision to take the younger player is the right one or not."

But even in the worst-case scenario of an early England exit, many will believe Hodgson at least got his squad selection right and hope that any lessons learnt in Brazil will pay dividends in the future.

For England to really make an impact this summer, Hodgson must also prove he can get his team selection and tactics right. That means getting his Liverpool contingent to reproduce the form which saw them go so close to winning the Premier League and, perhaps more importantly, getting the best out of Wayne Rooney.

The Manchester United striker has barely been mentioned in the build-up to this World Cup, in contrast to the past two tournaments when he has carried the hopes of a nation.

It is a decade since he lit up Euro 2004 as an 18-year-old and having failed to score in eight previous World Cup appearances, this could be his time to shine on the biggest stage of all.

"We have nothing to fear with Wayne," said Hodgson. "His attitude is spot on. His desire could not be better.

"Has he got the ability? Yes, he has, so it is just a case of bring on the matches and on that particular day Wayne Rooney can find the form that makes him who he is."

Having nothing to fear could be the key to this youthful England squad ending the years of hurt.

You win nothing with kids apparently. And while nobody is expecting England to win the World Cup, this squad will at least hope to return with their heads held high.

ENGLAND'S POSSIBLE STARTING XI

Roof gets go-ahead

BRAZIL 2014 organisers insist an incomplete roof at Sao Paulo's Itaquerao Stadium will not affect it hosting matches.

Constructors have admitted they will not finish the intended design until after the tournament, but the event's local organising committee have stressed this will not be a problem.

The Itaquerao Stadium will host the opening match between Brazil and Croatia on June 12 before England face Uruguay there a week later.

The local organising committee said: "The only aspect which will be unfinished is the inner liner, not impacting the protection of the stands."

Ribery's swansong

FRANCE winger Franck Ribery says this World Cup will be his last.

The 31-year-old, who also appeared for Les Bleus in the 2006 and 2010 tournaments, has set his sights on a winning farewell to the event.

"It will be my last World Cup," said Ribery.

"We have to go there to achieve something, to try to win the World Cup, quite simply."

However, the Bayern Munich star has announced no plans to retire from international football and is expected to be available for Euro 2016, which France will host.

Frank is go-to guy

ROY HODGSON has announced that midfielder Frank Lampard will be England's vice-captain at the World Cup.

The 35-year-old Chelsea star, who has been named captain six times, was skipper when England were last in Brazil a year ago.

"Frank Lampard is vice-captain," said Hodgson. "I have always thought that he was going to be a key member of this 23 because of his experience and what he brings to the team apart from footballing ability.

"He brings a lot of other things to us in terms of his leadership qualities and characteristics."

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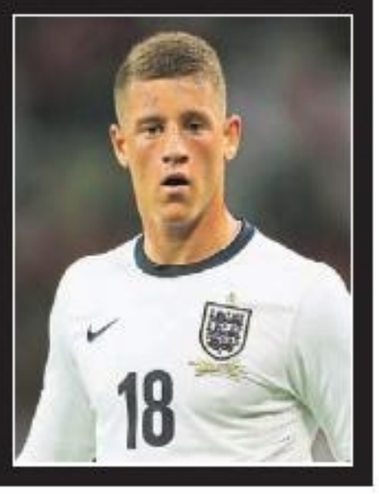

ABOVE: Adam Lallana has emerged as a real talent at Southampton this season

LEFT: Daniel Sturridge shows his goalscoring instinct in the recent friendly against Denmark

RIGHT: Ross Barkley has drawn comparisons with Paul Gascoigne

Young Lions are not quite ready to roar

ENGLAND winning the World Cup in Brazil would be a staggering success, wouldn't it? I think, though, we all know that is highly unlikely and, going into the tournament, all of our expectations are reasonable.

Saying that, I think we look in a much better place than six months ago with the emergence of so many young players with lots of talent.

These guys have shown in the Premier League that they can keep the ball well, which is the kind of football you need to play in a country like Brazil.

Let's be realistic – no European team has ever won the World Cup in South America and it will be very difficult for an England side who plays like we do to actually win it. If we get to the quarter-finals then that would be a pretty good effort, and anything beyond that would be punching above our weight.

I believe England are a side very much in transition from the so-called 'Golden Generation', with most of those either finished or coming to the end of their career, and a group who have not reached their prime yet.

So we have got to be realistic and sensible. This World Cup will be about nurturing young talent, letting them off the leash and telling them to go for it and enjoy it without putting too much pressure on.

What Roy Hodgson will have with this England squad is a group of genuinely exciting young players, we have seen them nurtured brilliantly at clubs like Liverpool and Southampton.

These players are ones who are not stained by previous World Cups – they are not scarred by losing a penalty shootout!

That could prove a big advantage, and that energy they will bring to the group could be very important.

People will, of course, argue these guys do not have enough experience: but you are either an international footballer or you are not.

We have guys like Adam Lallana, who is not actually that young, but has emerged recently in an excellent Southampton side, and Raheem Sterling, who is a breathtaking footballer. Liverpool manager Brendan Rodgers says he is the best young talent in Europe, and I do not think he was exaggerating as he is certainly right up there.

Then you have his Anfield team-mate Daniel Sturridge, who has come on as a proven goalscorer, and has got that degree of arrogance which you absolutely need to score goals in that position.

Another player to have come on beautifully under Rodgers at Liverpool is Jordan Henderson. He is someone who has a great engine which will be vitally important, and technically he can play.

Then you have Everton's Ross Barkley, and for me he is a massive talent. Like Sterling, he can go past people and helps give England those things which we have been lacking.

Age is not the slightest bit important if you are good enough, because within that squad you have got a couple of wise old heads around – like captain Steven Gerrard for one.

I really feel Barkley could emerge as a potential star of the tournament, and I can see certain things in his game like Paul Gascoigne. He is incredibly strong, and I think has got a similar stature to Gazza, with that ability to score amazing goals.

I guess on the defensive side, yes, he is probably lacking in terms of tactical nous. But if you play him in a certain position then that wouldn't necessarily be that important.

So while I am not going to say Barkley is 'the next Gazza', I think there are two or three who could impress on the big stage as Gazza did for us at Italia 90. As I have already said, Sterling is a phenomenal talent and has shown consistency to play in a number of positions, which is incredible for one so inexperienced.

> "This World Cup will be about letting them off the leash and telling them to go for it"

Lallana is another who is a beautiful footballer. He lacks a slight bit of pace, but he is wonderfully gifted with both feet and keeps the ball so well which is so important.

I touched on Sturridge already, whom I think could comfortably emerge and become a star of this World Cup.

But, just like for us in Italy all those years ago, things have to come together.

Things you don't find out until the tournament is whether these guys can cope with the pressures of playing against the world's greatest players, or with the unbelievable microscope which is on you, especially from your own country, even if the expectation this year is not what it has been.

A lot of our young players have not been able to cope with all that in the past, but this group seem to be coping admirably for their clubs in the Premier League, so let's find out.

Just what team Roy will put out against Italy in Manaus remains to be seen, but while that opening fixture of a World Cup is of course important, history tells us you can do reasonably well without winning your first game. I should know, because in Mexico 1986 we lost our first game to Portugal!

So while it is not a must-win fixture to go through, losing it would make it very difficult to qualify out of what is always going to be a tight group.

■ *Gary Lineker was talking to Jim van Wijk*

BBC Lineker will lead the BBC's TV coverage of the finals and will be joined by Rio Ferdinand, Thierry Henry and Clarence Seedorf

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FOCUS
How England qualified

Moldova 0 England 5 (7 September 2012)
England launched their qualifying campaign with a five-star performance in Moldova, recording their biggest away win since 1993. Frank Lampard's double was complemented by efforts from Jermain Defoe, James Milner and Leighton Baines.

England 1 Ukraine 1 (11 September 2012)
Skipper Steven Gerrard was sent off as Lampard's 86th-minute penalty spared England's blushes at Wembley. The Liverpool captain was red-carded two minutes from the end of a poor display from Roy Hodgson's men, who were saved when Yevhen Khacherdi blocked Danny Welbeck's flick with an arm, allowing Lampard to drive home from the spot.

England 5 San Marino 0 (12 October 2012)
Wayne Rooney scored twice, taking him to 31 international goals, one more than Alan Shearer, Nat Lofthouse and Tom Finney. Manchester United team-mate Welbeck also scored twice before Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain, left, became England's fourth youngest scorer, behind Rooney, Michael Owen and Tommy Lawton.

Poland 1 England 1 (17 October 2012)
After a waterlogged pitch caused the original game to be postponed, the match went ahead 20 hours late in Warsaw. England were well below their best, but managed to cling on to a precious point, with Rooney's first-half goal cancelled out by a Kamil Glik header.

San Marino 0 England 8 (22 March 2013)
Hodgson's men recorded their biggest win since 1987, with Defoe netting twice to head a lengthy list of scorers that also included Lampard, Rooney and substitute Daniel Sturridge.

Montenegro 1 England 1 (26 March 2013)
England survived a second-half battering to snatch a precious point against leaders Montenegro in Podgorica. They deserved their lead through Rooney's 35th goal for his country, but the hosts were transformed in the second half and equalised through substitute Dejan Damjanovic.

England 4 Moldova 0 (6 September 2013)
Hodgson was left raging despite England going top of Group H as a yellow card for two-goal hero Welbeck ruled him out of the crucial qualifier in Ukraine. The Manchester United man was booked for protesting against a tight line-call against him on a night in which Rickie Lambert and Gerrard also scored.

Ukraine 0 England 0 (10 September 2013)
England took a small step towards qualification after they scraped a draw in Kiev thanks to Ukraine's profligacy. Amid a booming atmosphere inside the Olympic Stadium, the hosts launched attack after attack, but they could not find their way past Joe Hart.

England 4 Montenegro 1 (11 October 2013)
Hodgson gambled on giving Andros Townsend, left, his debut and he did not disappoint, as he put the seal on the win with a 25-yard goal which flew in via a post. Branko Boskovic scored an own-goal, Sturridge converted a penalty and Rooney was also on the scoresheet while Damjanovic notched for the visitors.

England 2 Poland 0 (15 October 2013)
England booked their ticket to Rio after edging past Poland in a nail-biting and thrilling encounter at Wembley. The 18,000 Poland fans made it feel like anything but a home game, and England huffed and puffed but could not find a way past Wojciech Szczesny until the 41st minute, when Rooney finally broke the deadlock. England supporters were left to bite their nails for most of the second half, but captain Gerrard made sure of the win two minutes from time.

All on Neymar to rekindle the spirit of 1970

Above: Pele after Brazil's 1970 final win over Italy

Left: Much is expected of Neymar

Right: A nightmare scenario would see Lionel Messi lift the World Cup in Rio

By Mark Staniforth

FROM samba stars to sunshine football, whole shanty-towns of cliches have clung to the 2014 World Cup finals since it was confirmed the competition would return to Brazil after 64 years.

Five-time winners they may be, but there is only one group of players that has truly come to symbolise the majesty of the Selecao. And once Brazil got the nod for 2014, evocations of the unforgettable 1970 squad were not short in coming: the goalscoring exploits of Jairzinho; the angled drives of Carlos Alberto; the flawless magic of Pele, who bestrode the successful bid like Christ the Redeemer itself.

Football folk around the globe revelled in visions of the ultimate football experience, a 32-team finals stretching from the shores of the Copacabana to the Amazon jungle; a month-long feast of round-the-clock sunny-side-up football.

But no sooner had the FIFA carnival hitched up and left town, taking their "sun, sand and soccer" soundbites with them, such idealised visions were quickly replaced by the harsh reality of the physical and economic costs of hosting the games.

Violent clashes marred Brazil's hosting of the Confederations Cup in July last year and protests of various sizes have persisted across the host cities, while building delays have at times left the suitability of various venues in serious doubt.

It was hardly the kind of vision that the cliche-mongers had in mind, and for all the Brazilians' undoubted ability to put on a party, it has created the kind of societal fissures which are unlikely to be plastered over in time for the big kick-off in Sao Paolo on June 12.

Nevertheless, one senses that the decades of unrivalled glory Brazil has brought to the global game has created a situation where the world is

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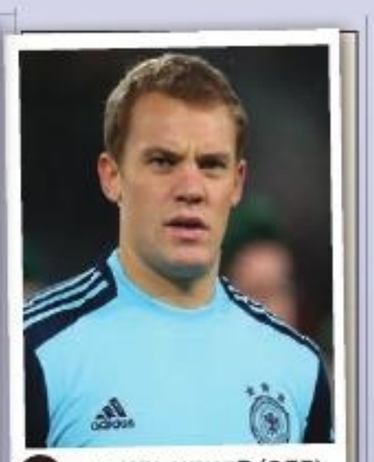
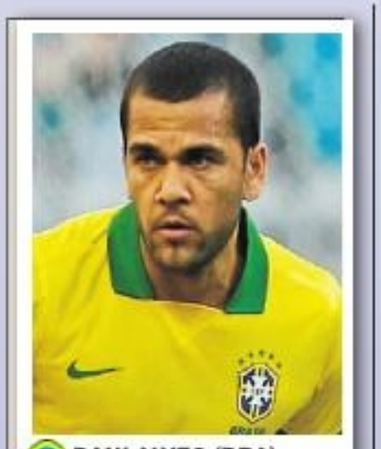
WORLD XI



MANUEL NEUER (GER)

Club: Bayern Munich
Age: 28 Caps: 45



DANI ALVES (BRA)

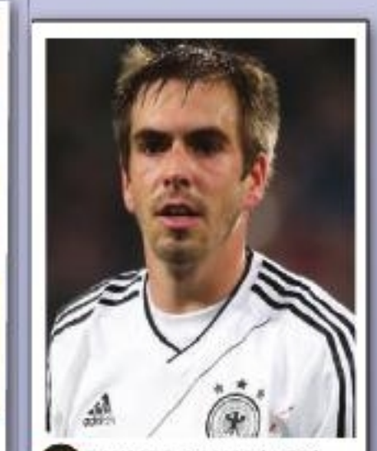
Club: Barcelona
Age: 31 Caps/Gls: 72/5

GIORGIO CHIELLINI (ITA)

Club: Juventus
Age: 29 Caps/Gls: 67/4

THIAGO SILVA (BRA)

Club: Paris St Germain
Age: 29 Caps/Gls: 45/2



PHILIPP LAHM (GER)

Club: Bayern Munich
Age: 30 Caps/Gls: 105/5

ANDREA PIRLO (ITA)

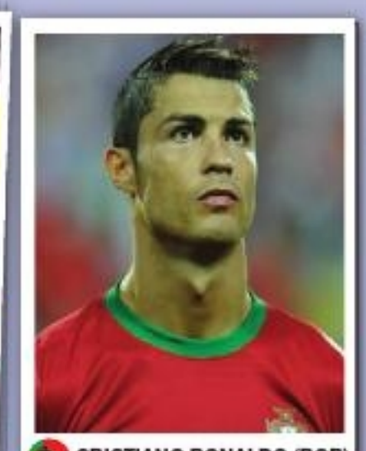
Club: Juventus
Age: 35 Caps/Gls: 108/13

YAYA TOURE (IVC)

Club: Man City
Age: 31 Caps/Gls: 82/16

ANDRES INIESTA (SPA)

Club: Barcelona
Age: 30 Caps/Gls: 94/11

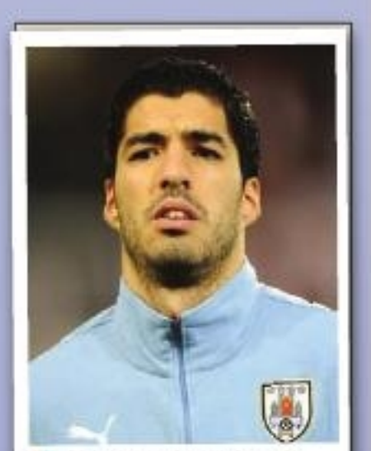


CRISTIANO RONALDO (POR)

Club: Real Madrid
Age: 29 Caps/Gls: 110/49

LIONEL MESSI (ARG)

Club: Barcelona
Age: 26 Caps/Gls: 83/37



LUIS SUAREZ (URU)

Club: Liverpool
Age: 27 Caps/Gls: 77/38

You are the boss: who would you pick for your World Cup XI?

By Mark Tattersall

SURELY it would be the easiest job in football management? Fancy being in charge of a team like this!

But first, of course, you have to pick your team.

Given the choice of all the gifted stars appearing at this summer's World Cup, who would you leave out? It's a familiar cliché, but it's a nice problem to have.

Everybody will have their favourites, no two teams would be quite the same, and the pub arguments would go on for ever. Here is how our selection panel came to a decision.

Goalkeeper wasn't too difficult, now that Iker Casillas is not even a regular for his club side, Real Madrid, with Germany's Manuel Neuer getting the nod over the veteran Italy captain, Gianluigi Buffon, and the coming man, Belgium's Thibaut Courtois.

World football is not blessed with great centre-backs at the moment, particularly since Carles Puyol retired, but our first rule is that all world teams should have an Italian defender in it, so their current vice-captain, the grizzled Giorgio Chillieni, is the pick. Alongside him, Thiago Silva may have his critics, but it is difficult not to choose the Brazil captain.

Another Brazilian, the fiery Dani Alves, and the eternally classy Germany captain Philipp Lahm are the full-backs, although the likes of Marcelo, Jordi Alba, Pablo Zabaleta and Fabio Coentrao can all feel unlucky.

In a 4-2-3-1 formation, there can surely be no argument about the two central midfielders. Yaya Toue is the only African to make the side, and the Manchester City man's power would be the perfect foil for the sublime skills of Italy's ageless genius, Andrea Pirlo. Which manager would not want those two?

At first glance, the front four looks obvious. Serial world player of the year Lionel Messi and current incumbent Cristiano Ronaldo are nailed-on selections in any team, and Luis Suarez's form for Liverpool and Uruguay in the past year make him an easy pick, too.

For the fourth spot, we agonised over Eden Hazard, Xavi Hernandez, Arturo Vidal, Thomas Muller, Franck Ribery, Arjen Robben, Neymar and Sergio Aguero, but decided there had to be at least one representative of the defending champions, and who better than 2010 World Cup final match-winner, Andres Iniesta.

And not an Englishman in sight? Hopefully, come July 13, we will be forced to change our minds on that.

Finally, spare a thought for this XI, who haven't even made it to the World Cup: Petr Cech (Czech Republic); Lukasz Piszczek (Poland), Neven Subotic (Serbia), Branislav Ivanovic (Serbia), David Alaba (Austria); Gareth Bale (Wales), Marek Hamsik (Slovakia), Christian Eriksen (Denmark), Arda Turan (Turkey); Zlatan Ibrahimovic (Sweden), Robert Lewandowski (Poland).

willing it to succeed, to lay foundations which could yield more seminal moments such as those seen in 1970.

The onus is evidently on the players themselves, not least a host team for whom even victory will never quite be enough – it is required to go hand in hand with the kind of flair and swagger which has been second-nature to so many generations of Brazilian stars.

Consider the pressure on the likes of Neymar, the Barcelona striker who was integral in his nation's Confederations Cup success, and who has what it takes to go down with the all-time greats if he can replicate that form on the biggest stage.

Such almighty expectation among a football-crazy nation of almost 200 million can hardly be tempered by the knowledge that if Neymar fails to hit the mark, the noisy neighbours could be the ones to fill his shoes.

Luis Suarez will lead Brazil's age-old rivals Uruguay into the finals as one of the most talented and controversial stars in the business, and will no doubt relish the prospect of tormenting the hosts on home soil. Neymar's Barcelona team-mate Lionel Messi is another World Cup winner waiting to happen, and there is surely nothing worse for the Brazilian nation to countenance than the idea of the man dubbed the 'New Maradona' lifting the trophy for Argentina in Rio.

The European challenge will be headed by holders Spain, Arjen Robben's Netherlands, who blazed through the qualification process with nine wins from 10 games, and Portugal, eager to prove they are more than Ballon d'Or winner Cristiano Ronaldo's one-man show.

Roy Hodgson's England approach the finals almost refreshed from the lack of expectation which swirls around his relatively young squad following the torment and tribulations of the 2010 campaign. Such slim hopes – after a group stage draw which placed them alongside Uruguay and Italy as well as Costa Rica – ought not disguise the fact that Hodgson has a number of stars who are the equal of any others on a given day.

Equally alluring are the outside chances of the likes of Ghana, who reached the quarter-finals four years ago, Chile, who proved their worth with a friendly win at Wembley in November, and Marc Wilmots' ludicrously talent-stuffed Belgian squad.

All have varying chances to make their mark and in common with all those that have gone before, stretching back to the 13-team opener in Uruguay in 1930, there will be others still who will stand up to write their names in history.

It would be wrong to imply that a sixth World Cup triumph for the host nation would provide some kind of instant, celebratory solution for the economic woes of those driven to take to the streets to protest the spiralling cost of the finals. When the World Cup roadshow has left town there will still be those shanty-towns poking up off the hillsides around Rio, just as there will be concerns over gun-crime and, ultimately, the arrival of another sporting monolith in the form of the 2016 Olympics.

But there can be no doubt the sight of Neymar and Co lifting the trophy would apply some significant balm. They claimed football came home in 1996. If that is so then this summer it is heading off on holiday, and only time will tell if it is staying for keeps.

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Miracle man Roy is on a mission

By Paul Hirst

IT seemed fitting, after almost half a century of failure, that the FA turned to a man who once claimed to have turned water into wine when they selected Fabio Capello's successor two years ago.

Ever since Sir Alf Ramsey led the Three Lions to glory on that memorable day at Wembley in 1966, eight Englishman, a Swede and an Italian have taken up the role of England manager.

All have failed.

Sven-Goran Eriksson, the Swedish element of that decatet, had the best chance of stopping the rot.

Yes, Sir Bobby Robson took England to the semi-finals of Italia '90, and Terry Venables reached the last four of the European Championship six years later.

But neither had the luck to be working with the likes of the so-called 'Golden Generation' of the time.

Eriksson failed to get the best out of David Beckham, Paul Scholes and Michael Owen – among others – when it came to tournament time.

Had the FA taken on another candidate – Roy Hodgson – when Kevin Keegan walked out on England in 2000, the story might have been different. We will never know.

What is for certain is that Hodgson, now two years into his spell as England manager, does not have such talented individuals at his disposal.

But that has not stopped Hodgson's enthusiasm for the job. The Londoner loves a challenge. He always has.

That is why he upped sticks from the capital to Sweden as a 28-year-old to take over at little-known side Halmstads BK. Halmstads had only survived relegation by virtue of goal difference in 1975, but one year later their English manager led them to be Swedish champions. Hodgson refers to it as his "Water into wine job". Few Englishmen managed abroad in the 1970s, but Hodgson had no hesitation in applying for the job.

For Hodgson, born August 9, 1947 into a modest home in Croydon, south London, was never afraid to stand out from the crowd.

While his school-mates were intoxicated by the revolutionary tones of the Rolling Stones, Hodgson's teenage years were spent listening to the likes of Timi Yuro, an American soul singer.

He was never afraid of bucking the trend. That is why he headed for Switzerland after his Scandinavian adventure, taking over the national side after a brief spell with Neuchatel Xamax.

Hodgson's work with the Swiss was near-miraculous, too. He took the nation to their first World Cup in 28 years in 1994, when they reached the second round. At one time Switzerland were ranked third in the world.

A turbulent time at Inter Milan followed. Hodgson took a poor team to the UEFA Cup final in 1997, but after being pelted by coins and lighters following the Nerazzurri's loss to Schalke, he was forced out.

More globe-trotting followed. Hodgson flitted from Blackburn, to Copenhagen to the United Arab Emirates, before returning to England with Fulham.

This time his work was given a much more English-sounding moniker – the Great Escape, leading Fulham away from relegation after taking over when the west London club were two points inside the drop zone.

He then succeeded in taking Fulham to a higher level – the Europa League final to be precise. Volcanic ash clouds, injuries and an 18-match run through the competition would not stop Hodgson taking Fulham to the final in Hamburg, where they lost to Atletico Madrid deep into extra-time.

An unsuccessful six-month spell at Liverpool did not put the FA off appointing Hodgson as national manager in 2012.

It is easy to see why. Hodgson is regarded as one of the best coaches in the game.

His globe-trotting has enabled him to speak five languages fluently, he has sat on UEFA technical committees and there are few players who have spoken negatively about their time working under him.

He is an engaging character, whose intelligence comes across clearly on camera. His favourite authors include Philip Roth, John Updike and Hermann Hesse.

Some mistake his laid-back appearances in front of the media for a lack of passion. But do not be fooled. Cuddly old Uncle Roy does not exist.

Just ask the Inter Milan press officer who Hodgson once pinned to the wall by the scruff of his neck during his time at the San Siro.

Ask Jamie Carragher and he will tell you the same.

"People think of Roy Hodgson as that nice 'good old Uncle Roy' fella'. But I've seen him lose his temper in the dressing room," said the former Liverpool captain.

That is good news for England, whose young guns may need a sharp reminder of their responsibilities.

The thousands of fans who travel to South America this summer, and the millions who watch on TV will be hoping this will be the year when Hodgson pulls off his latest miracle, for that is what England need to end 48 years of hurt.

FACTFILE Roy Hodgson

Born
9 Aug 1947, Croydon

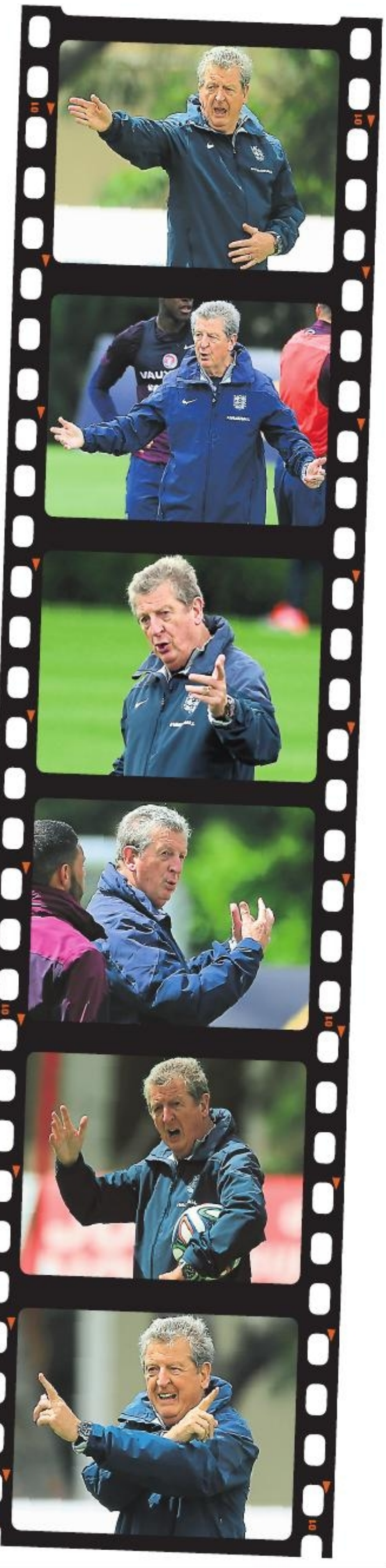
Playing career
Crystal Palace
Appearances 0
Goals 0
Non-League: Tonbridge Angels, Gravesend & Northfleet, Maidstone Utd, Ashford Town, Berea Park, Carshalton Athletic.

International teams

1992–1995	Switzerland
2002–2004	UAE
2006–2007	Finland
2012–	England

Clubs managed

1976–1980	Halmstads
1980–1982	Bristol City (asst)
1982	Bristol City
1982	IK Oddevold
1983–1984	Orebro
1985–1989	Malmo
1990–1992	Neuchatel Xamax
1995–1997	Inter Milan
1997–1998	Blackburn
1999	Inter (caretaker)
1999–2000	Grasshoppers
2000–2001	FC Copenhagen
2001	Udinese
2004–2005	Viking
2007–2010	Fulham
2010–2011	Liverpool
2011–2012	West Brom



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Ross Barkley

Exciting Barkley can prove he is no wildcard

By Andrew McDermott

ALMOST everyone in football who has tracked the development of Ross Barkley is convinced the Everton midfielder is a star in the making.

The only doubt is whether this tournament is too soon for the 20-year-old and if Roy Hodgson will give him the opportunity to shine.

After the so-called 'golden generation' of English football proved no better than those that had gone before, there are understandable calls for patience regarding the new crop.

That is certainly the warning given by Everton boss Roberto Martinez, but the Spaniard is also aware Barkley is a special talent.

He said: "Ross has incredible potential. We need to give him time and accept he is not ready yet, that he will take time, but he has absolutely everything to mark a real era in English football. Any player with talent needs to develop an understanding to know how to be effective. As a country we need to be a little bit more protective about our youngsters, because if we look after him properly he can give us something unique in English football and to the nation.

"He is developing an incredible awareness around him and technically he is someone who you could compare against the young Brazilians, Dutch or Spanish players."

Former England striker Gary Lineker has compared Barkley to Paul Gascoigne, though he will hope the former has the mental strength to cope with the growing fame and pressure.

Barkley was spotted by Everton at the age of 11 and it quickly became clear he was a bit special, including when he was asked to take four penalties and took two with each foot.

His strength and skill meant it was not obvious what his best position was but he settled into a midfield role and was playing for England Under-16s by 14.

A broken leg put his career on hold just after he had broken into Everton's first-team squad, but that is where there is a crucial difference between Barkley and Gascoigne.

While the latter was never quite the same player after famously suffering a serious knee injury at Wembley, Barkley has quickly put the injury behind him.

And while Gascoigne's World Cup career finished in tears, Barkley will hope for a happier ending.

FACTFILE
Ross Barkley

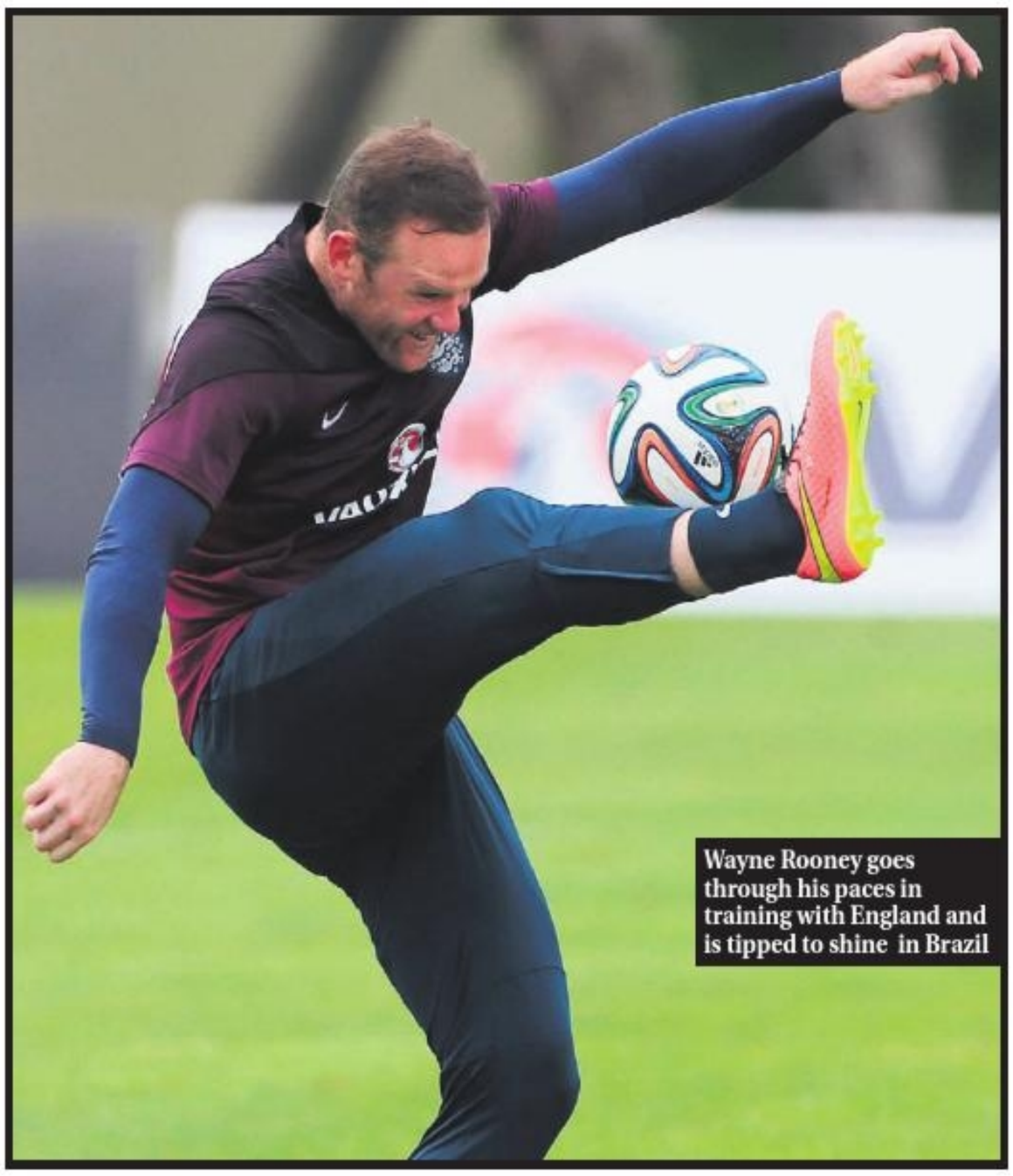
Born
5 Dec 1993, Liverpool

Clubs

Sheffield Wed (loan)	
Appearances	12 (1)
Goals	4
Leeds United (loan)	
Appearances	3 (1)
Goals	0
Everton	
Appearances	35 (21)
Goals	7

International debut
v Moldova, Sept 2013

Pele label was curse for Rooney


Wayne Rooney goes through his paces in training with England and is tipped to shine in Brazil

By Simon Peach

SVEN GORAN ERIKSSON was to blame for many of England's failures during his time in charge of the national side, but one that often goes unnoticed is his decision to publicly proclaim Wayne Rooney as the new Pele.

As Eriksson sat down to address the media in the bowels of the newly-refurbished Estadio da Luz o n June 21 2004 he used Rooney's name in the same breath as the best footballer of all time.

"I don't remember anyone making such a big impact on a tournament since Pele in the 1958 World Cup... he's a complete footballer," the then England manager said.

The Swede was flush with emotion after watching Rooney fire England into the quarter-finals of Euro 2004 with a well-taken double against Croatia. His first – a 20-yard screamer that totally bamboozled the Croatian goalkeeper – and his second – a calm finish following a deep run that began inside his own half – were top-class strikes.

The two Rooney scored against Switzerland was also was also impressive. He became the youngest scorer in European Championship history with his first, just as Pele became the youngest to find the net in World Cup history against Switzerland in 1958.

Eriksson meant his comments as a compliment, but instead those words have weighed heavy on Rooney's shoulders ever since.

Every time he puts on an England shirt at a major finals, he is weighed down by so much pressure it is like he is wearing a lead vest underneath the Three Lions which sit on his chest.

Rooney's only goal in the three major finals that he has played in since 2004 was two years ago in Euro 2012. That is a record Pele would wince at.

In the 2006 World Cup, hindered by an injury to a metatarsal in his right foot, Rooney drew a blank against Trinidad & Tobago, Sweden and Ecuador before he was sent off against Portugal as Eriksson's team went home from Germany with nothing.

Four years later in South Africa, again struggling with injury, Rooney could not find the net against the United States and Slovenia while the striker erupted in a fit of rage after the goalless draw against Algeria, criticising the England fans who booed the team off.

Rooney also flopped in the 4-1 defeat to Germany in the second round. Sir Alex Ferguson, who had watched Rooney bang in 34 goals for United that year, said his star striker could not deal with the pressure on his shoulders at the 2010 World Cup.

"There was such expectation on him," the former United manager said.

"There was talk that he was going to be the player of the tournament, that he was going to outshine (Lionel) Messi and (Cristiano) Ronaldo and he's not got great experience of World Cups really. You wait, though. In Brazil you will see a different player."

Will Ferguson be right? Will the real Rooney stand up in Brazil just as so many England fans want him to?

Rooney missed the last three games of United's season with a groin problem, which came a month after a toe injury which prevented him from kicking a ball properly, according to then manager David Moyes.

But the striker is so determined to be fit that he took two physios on holiday with him to Portugal recently. "This time I honestly feel good," the former Everton striker said. "I have looked after myself and will be as fit as I can for this tournament. I will be ready. I'm looking forward to it."

The fact Rooney will share the spotlight with the likes of Daniel Sturridge, Raheem Sterling and Adam Lallana – who have all been on fire this year – will reduce the pressure on England's talisman.

Unlike Eriksson, Hodgson is wise enough to dodge comparisons. The England manager knows Rooney's physical and mental state will be key to his chances of success in the sweltering heat of Brazil. And the 66-year-old thinks this time Rooney will not fail. "This is the perfect opportunity for him to prove to people around the world what we already know – that he is a gifted footballer, capable of playing in many positions and someone who is a leading light in his team, which is one of the best in the world," he said.

"It would be nice to see him reproducing that form for England and I am confident he will."

Rooney does not have enough time to rack up three World Cup winner's medals like Pele did, but that will not matter to the striker and his legions of fans.

One would be enough.

FACTFILE
Wayne Rooney

Born
24 October 1985, Liverpool

Clubs

Everton	
Appearances	48 (29)
Goals	17
Manchester Utd	
Appearances	396 (45)
Goals	217

International debut
v Australia, February 2003

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Prandelli held in highest regard

CESARE PRANDELLI is still to take charge at his first World Cup, but has already claimed a monumental victory as the coach of Italy.

In breaking with tradition, the country's football federation (FIGC) has told the Brescia native that he will remain in charge of the national team no matter what happens in Brazil.

None of Prandelli's predecessors had such a guarantee heading into a major tournament.

Prandelli's contract was set to expire this summer, but the 56-year-old will now remain in charge until the end of Euro 2016.

"It gives me great pride that the federation has proposed to me a two-year contract extension regardless of the results in Brazil," said Prandelli.

"The Federation has sent an extraordinary message, that you don't just focus on the end result, but rather on what has been done and what can be done."

Prandelli replaced Marcello Lippi at the helm in 2010, looking to restore national pride after Italy's failure to progress past the group stages of the World Cup in South Africa.

He needed to rejuvenate an Azzurri squad that had many ageing players from the 2006 World Cup-winning side. Good results have followed ever since.

Prandelli has won 22 and lost just 11 of his 51 games in charge of Italy. The former Juventus midfielder led Italy to the final of Euro 2012 and to third place in last year's Confederations Cup.

The Azzurri ended their World Cup qualifying campaign unbeaten and top of Group B with 22 points from 10 games. "The renewal of Cesare's contract is a signal for the future," said FIGC president Giancarlo Abete. "There is great confidence in his work and in his staff."

Since taking over, Prandelli has demanded the best behaviour from his players, whether playing for Italy or their clubs.

"The ethics code is with us and non-negotiable," said Prandelli. "The players must have the strength not to fall for provocations."

Unruly behaviour has hurt Italy in in the past, with Francesco Totti being banned in Euro 2004 for spitting at an opponent and Roma's Daniele De Rossi suspended during the 2006 World Cup for elbowing the USA's Brian McBride.

Prandelli has stood by his decisions, making no exceptions, even if it meant leaving the likes of Mario Balotelli out of selection for a crucial qualifier.

Prandelli has also emphasised the importance of the social responsibility of the national team towards the country.

As part of the Vivi Azzurro project, the national team have visited the Sollicciano prison in Florence to speak to inmates and has also trained in towns that have been hit by natural disasters.

"It's in Prandelli's and the national team's DNA to show a sense of responsibility," said Abete.

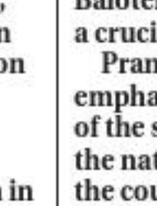
As for Prandelli, he does not consider it a duty as coach, but that of a human being. "We cannot forget that the Azzurri jersey you wear on loan and that one has to honour it," he said.

"We have to give joy to those that are going through difficult times."

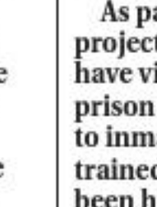
His solidarity and correctness have earned him the respect of the nation.

ITALY

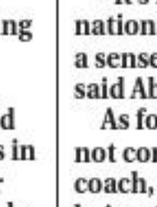
Coach Cesare Prandelli
Has revolutionised a side at its lowest ebb after the debacle of South Africa with a blend of youth and experience, and an insistence on player discipline on club and national duty.



Star man
Andrea Pirlo (Juventus)
The elegant playmaker has the gift of picking out a team-mate from anywhere on the pitch, at any speed and typically with devastating results. Also a brilliant dead-ball expert.



One to watch
Mario Balotelli (AC Milan)
As capable of lighting up any game as he is likely to have a meltdown and damage the Azzurri from within, but nevertheless a rare talent.



How they qualified
Europe group winners

World Cup record

1934	WINNERS
1938	WINNERS
1950	1st round
1954	1st round
1962	1st round
1966	1st round
1970	Runners-up
1974	1st round
1978	4th place
1982	WINNERS
1986	Round of 16
1990	3rd place
1994	Runners-up
1998	Quarter-finals
2002	Round of 16
2006	WINNERS
2010	1st round

FIFA ranking 9
Stan James odds 25-1

Ciro Immobile has blossomed at Torino and finished this season as Serie A's top scorer

Ciro school of hard knocks

By Cindy Garcia-Bennett

NOTHING is as valuable to a football player as experience.

Ciro Immobile needed a year of transition to Serie A before he could blossom into one of Italy's most lethal strikers.

Following a debut campaign in Italy's top flight in which he scored only five goals in 33 league appearances for Genoa and, after hearing criticism that he was not ready for the big time, Immobile has proved week-in and week-out this season at Torino that he does have what it takes.

The 24-year-old has finished as the "capocannoniere", the top scorer in Serie A, with 22 goals in 33 League games, and his performances helped Torino finish seventh in the standings.

He also made his senior debut with Italy in an international friendly against world champions Spain in March.

"Last season he struggled, but Ciro has character," said Italy coach Cesare Prandelli. "He has a striker's DNA and he has not been affected by negative experiences. Many said he wasn't ready for Serie A, but now those critics praise him. He is doing very well."

The journey has not been easy.

Immobile joined Juventus in 2009, but had loan spells at Siena, Grossetto and Pescara. It was at the latter where his career began to take off. He scored a Serie B record 28 goals to help Pescara finish top in the 2011-12 campaign and gain promotion before he joined Genoa. "I will always remain a fan of Pescara," said Immobile. "It was my launchpad to top football."

Immobile's hopes of playing for Juve, the club that had signed him at the age of 18 for 80,000 euros, were dashed when the Italian giants sold part of his rights to cross-town rivals Torino last summer.

"Despite my (Juve) past, I was welcomed in the Torino camp with a lot of enthusiasm, something I didn't expect would happen," said Immobile. "I was very touched. (Torino coach Giampiero) Ventura is similar to (Pescara coach Zdenek) Zeman.

"From a tactical and character standpoint, they have both made me grow as a person and as a player. I will never stop thanking Ventura, because this has been a great step for me."

Immobile forged a potent attacking partnership with Alessio Cerci at Torino, with his team-mate notching 13 goals and setting up 11 others in Serie A. Prandelli spoke during the season of Cerci's unselfishness and it was no surprise when he, too, made Italy's squad. "I'm really happy that the national team coach has considered Cerci and I for the squad," said Immobile. "On the pitch we understand each other very well."

> "To have overtaken two legends like Pulici and Graziani gives me great pride"

The year has been so good for Immobile that the Neapolitan has surpassed Torino greats Paolo Pulici and Francesco Graziani with a single-season record of goals.

Toro's all-time scorer Pulici and Graziani had each scored 21 goals.

"To have overtaken two legends like Pulici and Graziani gives me great pride," he said. "I think I am very similar to them in character and also in my mindset to always play my best. I have worked so hard to reach this level, but I never expected to have such a season.

"Even though we just missed out on qualifying for European football next season, our aim was for our fans to enjoy watching us play again."

Immobile has raised plenty of eyebrows this season and not just in Italy, with German side Borussia Dortmund, who will play in the Champions League next season, leading the chase to sign him this summer.

"It will be difficult to turn down an important offer from abroad," he said. "But in the future I would love to play for Napoli, my home club."

LATEST CAMEROON BETTING: 1000/1*
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Forsythia Walk
5.30pm and 7.30pm
Tel: Lizi 07771 346702

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Raven Road
5.30pm and 7.30pm
Tel: Jo 07515 719190

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Fort Hill Community School
Kenilworth Road
7:30pm
Tel: Tina 07810 147400

South Ham
Westside Community Centre
Paddock Road
7.30pm
Tel: Kirsty 07843 276953

Overton
St Lukes Hall, Winchester Street
7.30pm
Tel: Lynn 07885 765341

Bramley
Bramley Village hall, The Street
7.30pm
Tel: Kate 07853 869168

WEDNESDAY

Kingsclere
Fieldgate Centre, Field Gate Drive
7.30pm
Tel: Lynn 07885 765341

Brighton Hill
Viables Craft Ctr, The Barn
The Harrow Way
5.30pm and 7.30pm
Tel: Carole 07976 701459

Tadley
Ambrose Allen Centre,
Franklin Avenue
5.30pm and 7.30pm
Tel: Emma 07795 065042

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Melrose Hall, Abbey Road
9.30am
Tel: Hazel 07796 158098
Kids Corner - Children Welcome

Popley
Melrose Hall, Abbey Road
5.30pm and 7.30pm
Tel: Hazel 07796 158098

Hartley Wintney
The V&A Centre, West Green Road
7.30pm
Tel: Nici 07770 675255

THURSDAY

Chineham
Chineham Village Hall
9.30am & 11.30am
Tel: Faith 07966 933994
Kids Corner - Children Welcome

Brighton Hill
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Sullivan Road
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Tel: Jo 07515 719190

Chineham
Christ Church
Reading Road
5.30pm and 7.30pm
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Forsythia Walk
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Is history repeating?

Ghiggia scores for Uruguay to silence the Maracana in the 1950 World Cup final

By Andrew McDermott

TWO-TIME World Cup winners Uruguay return to the scene of their greatest triumph having endured now customary struggles in securing a place at the finals.

Even allowing for the gruelling nature of the South American section, La Celeste tend to make qualification harder than most.

Buoyed by their 2011 Copa America triumph, Uruguay made a flying start to the campaign, with three of their opening four home games in Montevideo producing four-goal victories.

Despite sitting top of the standings with 11 points from five matches, the wheels came off dramatically for Oscar Tabarez's men.

A 4-0 thrashing away to Colombia began a run of six matches without a win before a relative recovery in the later rounds booked Uruguay into their fourth consecutive inter-continental play-off.

This familiarity with death-or-glory assignments over two legs stood them in fine stead as Jordan were demolished 5-0 during the opening game – a stellar forward line led by Luis Suarez and Edinson Cavani enjoying a field day.

A goalless draw at home completed the formality and Tabarez will lead a group with undoubted pedigree when it comes to competing at the highest level.

Suarez's ability has never been in doubt but, last season, the mercurial forward parked his penchant for controversy and established himself as one of the world's finest players.

His 11 goals in qualification and performances in the 2011 Copa America demonstrate this constant menace to any defence is equally talismanic for his country as he is for Liverpool.

However, a recent operation on a knee has raised doubts that he will be fit for the opening game.

The current squad is an ageing one, and their mid-qualification slump offers a stark reminder of the team's vulnerabilities.

Nevertheless, hopes remain high for the country that silenced the Maracana to pip Brazil to the 1950 World Cup in their own back yard.

Few coaches in the competition will be able to match Tabarez when it comes to experience. His association with the tournament dates back to 1990, when he led Uruguay to the quarter-finals in Italy. The way he negotiated qualifying this time around showed he remains one of the game's shrewdest tacticians.

URURUGUAY

Coach Oscar Tabarez
Led Uruguay to the quarter-finals in 1990, and returned for a second spell with La Celeste in 2006, leading them to the 2010 semi-finals and glory in the 2011 Copa America.

Star man
Luis Suarez (Liverpool)
An 11-goal haul in qualification and the player-of-the-tournament award at the 2011 Copa America show he is a big threat, but a recent knee op but delay his entry into the competition.

One to watch
Edinson Cavani (PSG)
As if Suarez was not enough, Uruguay have another of the world's top strikers. The centre-forward is lethal in the air and with both feet.

How they qualified
Intercontinental play-off

World Cup record

1930	WINNERS
1950	WINNERS
1954	4th place
1962	1st round
1966	Quarter-finals
1970	4th place
1974	1st round
1986	Round of 16
1990	Round of 16
2002	1st round
2010	4th place

FIFA ranking 5
Stan James odds 25-1

Bryan Ruiz is Costa Rica's star man – but is infuriatingly inconsistent

Talented Ruiz will hope to provide spark

COSTA RICA return to make their fourth World Cup finals appearance and coach Jorge Luis Pinto's youthful squad will be intent on springing a few surprises.

Thrown into a daunting Group D line-up alongside Uruguay, Italy and England, little is expected of the Central American nation, but Pinto's men should prove a wholly different proposition to the last Costa Rica team to reach world football's grandest stage eight years ago.

At the 2006 tournament in Germany, Los Ticos trudged home without a point to their name – a brace from flamboyant striker and national hero Paulo Wanchope in the opening match against the hosts one of few memorable moments in a wretched campaign.

The 2002 vintage also fell at the first hurdle, unable to emulate a World Cup debut at Italia '90 under globe-trotting coach Bora Milutinovic. Victories over Sweden and Scotland before elimination at the hands of Czechoslovakia in the round of 16 still represent a high for Costa Rican football.

Such a return this time around would make a mockery of pre-tournament oddsmakers, but a significant pool of European-based players means the pedigree Pinto has at his disposal should not be doubted.

Previous World Cup experience will be lacking, but attacker Bryan Ruiz, Levante goalkeeper Keylor Navas and Olympiakos' on-loan Arsenal forward Joel Campbell lead a strong European contingent.

Twelve of these featured among the squad as Ruiz – who is temporarily plying his trade in Holland with PSV Eindhoven – and Real Salt Lake's Alvaro Saborio netted to see off Mexico in the final round of CONCACAF matches, with qualification already secured. Ruiz is undoubtedly the star man but, in the tradition of Costa Rica's previous leading light Wanchope, he can appear a world-beater one week and a no-hoper the next.

Fulham supporters did not see much of his talent on display after his move to Craven Cottage in August 2011, but his loan spell at PSV Eindhoven looks to have him back to his best ahead of the tournament.

However, Pinto's men are unlikely to survive beyond the group stages.

COSTA RICA

Coach Jorge Luis Pinto
The Colombian first took charge of Los Ticos in 2004, only to be dismissed a year later. Costa Rica failed at the 2006 finals and were absent in 2010, prompting Pinto's return.

Star man
Bryan Ruiz (Fulham)
Fulham fans saw too little of his best following a big-money move in August 2011 but, luckily for Costa Rica, a loan move to PSV Eindhoven has revitalised their star man.

One to watch
Joel Campbell (Arsenal)
Shot to prominence on loan at Olympiakos with a superb goal in the Champions League victory over Manchester United this season.

How they qualified
Second, Concacaf

World Cup record

1990	Round of 16
2002	1st round
2006	1st round

FIFA ranking 34
Stan James odds 3000-1

LATEST COLOMBIA BETTING: 28/1*
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Right said FRED

No.9 could be the real star behind Brazil success

By James Cann

MORE than £50million was spent to bring Neymar to Barcelona, but Brazil will find their most valuable asset playing his club football at the Maracana.

His mononym may be a familiar one in Europe but, despite capturing attention with the occasional flash of inspiration during his four-year stint with Lyon, Fred is not a household name outside Brazil.

But that could change quickly if he helps lead the Selecao to World Cup glory. Fans of the five-time world champions have always obsessed over their strikers – players like Pele, Romario and Ronaldo have electrified football fans around the world – but heading into a first World Cup on home soil since 1950 concerns have been raised over an absence of true stars up front.

Most irritatingly, Atletico Madrid hot-shot Diego Costa has turned his back on the country of his birth to represent Spain.

And while Neymar echoes the exciting style of play made famous by the likes of Ronaldinho and Garrincha with his playmaking ability, he can lack the killer touch required in the box when he is not scoring spectacular goals.

He will not, therefore, lead the line for Brazil coach Luiz Felipe Scolari, who will instead use the Nou Camp starlet as a young foil for a 30-year-old who regularly scores in a near-deserted stadium.

Fred headed home to Brazil and Rio de Janeiro club Fluminense after being released by Lyon in early 2009. Strong in the air, intelligent and skilful on the ball, Fred soon became a fan favourite.

He scored twice on his debut and broke Magno Alves' league scoring record when firing his 44th Brasileiro goal in 2011. He had not featured for Brazil since 2007, but his exploits in the capital city earned him a place in the 2011 Copa America squad. And by the summer of 2013, he was firmly established as Brazil's first-choice No.9.

> "Beyond his goalscoring prowess, Fred is highly skilled in creating space for his team-mates"

He emerged from the bench to score against England at Wembley in the first game of Scolari's second spell in charge. He stayed in the team and hit further goals against Italy, Russia and – once again – England, this time at the newly-renovated Maracana.

The best was yet to come as Fred lit up the Confederations Cup with two goals against Italy, one against Uruguay, and two in the final victory over Spain.

Beyond his goalscoring prowess he is highly skilled in distracting opposition defences and creating space for his team-mates – a trait he used to devastating effect when freeing up Neymar to score a hat-trick in March's 5-0 victory over South Africa.

A succession of leg injuries threatened to wreck Fred's World Cup dream by sidelining him for four months in late 2013, but he has battled his way back to full fitness to make Scolari's squad.

Off the pitch he has found religion and reined in some of his more extravagant habits – notoriety has followed him around the bars and nightclubs of Rio in recent years.

But Scolari, forever devoted to the idea of the traditional Brazilian number nine, is banking on Fred retaining his maverick edge for a few weeks yet.

Flair and work-rate is potent mix

EVER since the FIFA World Cup was awarded to Brazil for a second time back in 2007 the excitement has been building – can the Selecao win the biggest prize in football for a sixth time? And on home soil?

There is always pressure on Brazil to win the World Cup, but seldom will a nation feel the burden of expectation more than the Samba Boys this summer.

Statistics show that one in three hosts are victorious and Luiz Felipe Scolari will not be disappointed with the favourites' Group A opponents as he looks to lift his second World Cup in 12 years.

But Croatia, Mexico and Cameroon know that the aura of invincibility surrounding Brazil has gone, having watched them crash out at the quarter-final stage in 2010 and 2006 and fail to progress beyond the last eight at the 2011 Copa America.

Mano Menezes, an inexperienced international manager, eventually bit the bullet and back came the overwhelmingly popular Scolari – their World Cup-winning coach from 2002. After a slow start, which saw them fail to beat Italy, Russia, Chile and England twice, everything clicked into place at last summer's Confederations Cup.

A tactical tweak saw Neymar nudged out to the left, with Fluminense forward Fred as the lone striker, and the pair were in devastating form as an electric Maracana watched them dismantle world and European champions Spain 3-0 in the final.

A year on and that settled system will be utilised once more, with Julio Cesar in goal behind Dani Alves, Thiago Silva, David Luiz and Marcelo.

Scolari is spoilt for choice when it comes to selecting the supporting acts behind his lone striker Fred with Oscar, Lucas Moura, Willian, Hulk and Neymar providing flair and attacking verse to counterbalance the dynamism and work-rate of Ramires, Paulinho and Luiz Gustavo (inset).

Brazil fans have had plenty to celebrate down the years but, if Scolari can work his magic on that exciting pool of talent, then winning the World Cup in their own backyard would surely spark a party to end all parties.

BRAZIL

Coach Luiz Felipe Scolari
Twelve years after leading his country to World Cup glory in Japan and South Korea back in 2002, 'Big Phil' Scolari is hoping lightning strikes twice this summer.

Star man
Neymar (Barcelona)
One of the world's most expensive when he moved to Barcelona from Santos last May, and a month later he was voted as the Confederations Cup's best player as Brazil lifted the trophy.

One to watch
Thiago Silva (PSG)
The imposing centre-back is strong in the air and comfortable on the ball, and is set to earn his 50th cap at the start of the tournament.

How they qualified
Hosts

World Cup record

1930	1st round
1934	1st round
1938	3rd place
1950	Runners-up
1954	Quarter-finals
1958	WINNERS
1962	WINNERS
1966	1st round
1970	WINNERS
1974	4th place
1978	3rd place
1982	2nd round
1986	Quarter-finals
1990	Round of 16
1994	WINNERS
1998	Runners-up
2002	WINNERS
2006	Quarter-finals
2010	Quarter-finals
FIFA ranking	4
Stan James odds	3-1

LATEST CROATIA BETTING: 200/1*
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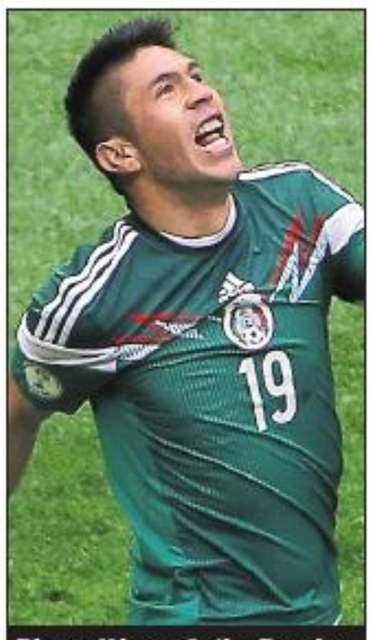
Play-off hero Oribe Peralta

Herrera targets semi-finals after qualifying close shave

IT took four coaches, 47 players, a near 14-000 mile round trip and a favour from the USA, but Mexico eventually made it to their 15th World Cup finals.

Confidence was high going into the 10-game Concacaf qualifying campaign, having clinched gold at the London 2012 Olympics, but their form at the traditional fortress of the Azteca deserted Mexico as they endured three goalless draws and a shock loss to Honduras to put their participation in real jeopardy.

That defeat, only their second in 78 matches at their 104,000-seater home, saw Jose Manuel Chepo de la Torre axed and his assistant Jose Luis Tena's reign lasted only one match.

Victor Manuel Vucetich, known as King Midas, showed anything but a golden touch during his two-game spell, which ended with his sacking after defeat to Costa Rica. That left El Tri grateful to bitter rivals USA, whose incredible late victory over Panama saw Mexico sneak into the play-offs, where they came up against New Zealand.

In stepped Miguel Herrera, borrowed from Club America, to steady the ship and he controversially stuck with what he knew, leaving out the overseas stars in favour of home-based players, including seven of his own in the starting line-up.

The gamble paid off with Santos Laguna striker Oribe Peralta netting twice in Mexico City and then grabbing a hat-trick in Wellington to seal a 9-3 aggregate victory.

Mexico's chances of making waves this summer could well depend on the form of their play-off hero, who has previous against Group A favourites Brazil, having scored both goals as they won the 2012 Olympic final.

He will be joined by European club stars such as Javier Hernandez, Javier Aquino and Andres Guardado, as well as home-grown talents like giant América striker Raul Jimenez, Tigres centre-back Hugo Ayala and León's midfielder Carlos Pena.

They almost missed out on a World Cup for the first time since 1990, but Mexico have reached the knockout stages in the last four tournaments and Herrera is backing his men to go beyond the quarter-finals for the first time. "We want to be among the top four," he said. "Our group is very tough, but we want to make history in Brazil."

Croatia bidding to summon spirit of '98

Croatia defender Dejan Lovren has been a revelation for Southampton

HOPES are high in Croatia that they can produce their best World Cup showing since their debut in 1998.

Back then, the Croats finished third in France, with striker Davor Suker finishing as the Golden Boot winner and Robert Prosinecki shining in midfield.

Now faith has been placed in Mario Mandzukic and Luka Modric to lead the country to the knockout stages once again, after Croatia failed to get through their group in both 2002 and 2006 and failed to qualify last time in South Africa.

Following another group-stage exit from Euro 2012, head coach Slaven Bilic was replaced at the helm by fellow France '98 veteran Igor Stimac, who proved to be an unpopular choice.

A stuttering campaign, which included two defeats to Scotland and a loss at home to group winners Belgium, left Croatia with only a play-off place, and Stimac was sacked before the two-legged tie with Iceland.

In came Under-21 coach Niko Kovac, the country's former captain. He negotiated the play-offs, but they came at a price.

Mandzukic was sent off while defender Josip Simunic led the fans in a post-match chant that carried pro-Nazi connotations, which landed the veteran a 10-match ban. However, the apparent damage does not appear to be as serious as first thought.

Bayern Munich striker Mandzukic will miss only one game – the opener against Brazil – and will be available to face Cameroon and Mexico in the games that will likely decide Croatia's fate.

In defence, Simunic's absence will not be felt should Dejan Lovren, the likely partner for Vedran Corluka in the back four, continue the form that has made him a revelation at Southampton. Meanwhile, the midfield will be built around Modric, who has morphed from a squad player to a first-choice starter for Real Madrid in the past season, while Sevilla's Ivan Rakitic is another who has shone in Spain.

Should the duo produce the same form in Brazil, with Lovren offering defensive security and Mandzukic a goal threat, Croatia could well reach the second round for the first time in 16 years.

Memories of Milla no longer enough for Cameroon

THINK of Cameroon at the World Cup and 1990 springs immediately to mind, with Roger Milla dancing at the corner flag.

The Indomitable Lions are assured of their place in World Cup folklore, but they, and the rest of the footballing world know, they need to start creating new memories on the big stage.

It is not as though they have not had enough chances to do so, and this will be their seventh appearance at the finals – a record for an African nation – thanks to a qualifying campaign that featured only one defeat.

The Cameroon public remain unconvinced about the side's merits, though, with former skipper Patrick Mboma among those scotching talk of a successful tournament.

A last-16 place, something they last achieved in Italy, would mark that, but recent history is not on their side. They failed to collect a point at South Africa 2010, and performances on the home front in the African Cup of Nations have left a lot to be desired, failing to make the finals in both 2012 and 2013.

It is no surprise that much of what they hope to do hinges on Samuel Eto'o. While many of their players have high-level experience, the veteran Chelsea man is their main weapon and has a proven track record of producing when it matters.

The 33-year-old came out of retirement for the play-off win over Tunisia and, after a quietly impressive season with Chelsea, heads to South America in good shape.

Behind him, Barcelona enforcer Alex Song will look to show the world he can cut it when it matters, having failed to convince since his move to the Catalan giants.

World Cup history dictates that one African side usually steals the show, with Ghana the neutral's champion in 2010. Cameroon have the pedigree and, in Eto'o, the figurehead, but it will take a real effort from coach Volker Finke to get out of their group.

CROATIA

Coach Niko Kovac
Promoted from coaching the under-21 side to rescue the senior squad following Igor Stimac's troubled spell in charge and began with a morale-boosting play-off success.

Star man
Mario Mandzukic (Bayern Munich)
The 2012 Champions League final goalscorer will miss the opener against Brazil, as he serves a suspension for his dismissal against Iceland.

One to watch
Ivan Rakitic (Sevilla)
The Sevilla playmaker will forge one of the most creative midfield partnerships in the tournament alongside Real Madrid's Luka Modric.

How they qualified
Europe play-off winners

World Cup record

1998	3rd place
2002	1st round
2006	1st round

FIFA ranking 20
Stan James odds 200-1

MEXICO

Coach Miguel Herrera
First appointed on an interim basis, he shocked Mexican football with his controversial squad for their play-off, but after beating New Zealand was handed a permanent deal.

Star man
Javier Hernandez (Man Utd)
The third generation of his family to play at a World Cup finals, Chicharito scored twice in the 2010 finals in South Africa and is Mexico's third highest scorer of all time.

One to watch
Giovani dos Santos (Villarreal)
The versatile playmaker has turned around his club career after hugely frustrating spells at Barcelona and Tottenham.

How they qualified
Intercontinental play-off

World Cup record

1930	1st round
1950	1st round
1954	1st round
1958	1st round
1962	1st round
1966	1st round
1970	Quarter-finals
1978	1st round
1986	Quarter-finals
1994	Round of 16
1998	Round of 16
2002	Round of 16
2006	Round of 16
2010	Round of 16

FIFA ranking 19
Stan James odds 125-1

CAMEROON

Coach Volker Finke
Rumours of unrest in the camp persist, as does talk of a rift with star striker Samuel Eto'o, and the veteran German tactician's main task will be to run a steady ship in Brazil.

Star man
Samuel Eto'o (Chelsea)
The modern-day Roger Milla in Cameroon, the 33-year-old came out of international retirement to help his nation qualify and needs a good World Cup on his CV.

One to watch
Alex Song (Barcelona)
May not be a standout performer at Barcelona as he was at Arsenal, but still a player to be feared and could see the World Cup as a shop window.

How they qualified
Africa play-off winners

World Cup record

1982	1st round
1990	Quarter-finals
1994	1st round
1998	1st round
2002	1st round
2010	1st round

FIFA ranking 50
Stan James odds 1000-1

LATEST COLOMBIA BETTING: 28/1*
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BRAZIL 2014 WORLD

GROUP A

June 12, 9pm, Sao Paulo	ITV
BRAZIL	
CROATIA	
June 13, 5pm, Natal	ITV
MEXICO	
CAMEROON	
June 17, 8pm, Fortaleza	BBC
BRAZIL	
MEXICO	
June 18, 11pm, Manaus	ITV
CAMEROON	
CROATIA	
June 23, 9pm, Brasilia	ITV
CAMEROON	
BRAZIL	
June 23, 9pm, Recife	ITV
CROATIA	
MEXICO	

GROUP A TABLE

Team	Pts
1	
2	
3	
4	

GROUP B

June 13, 8pm, Salvador	BBC
SPAIN	
NETHERLANDS	
June 13, 11pm, Cuiaba	ITV
CHILE	
AUSTRALIA	
June 18, 8pm, Rio de Janeiro	BBC
SPAIN	
CHILE	
June 18, 5pm, Porto Alegre	ITV
AUSTRALIA	
NETHERLANDS	
June 23, 5pm, Curitiba	ITV
AUSTRALIA	
SPAIN	
June 23, 5pm, Sao Paulo	ITV
NETHERLANDS	
CHILE	

GROUP B TABLE

Team	Pts
1	
2	
3	
4	

GROUP C

June 14, 5pm, Belo Horizonte	BBC
COLOMBIA	
GREECE	
June 15, 2am, Recife	ITV
IVORY COAST	
JAPAN	
June 19, 5pm, Brasilia	BBC
COLOMBIA	
IVORY COAST	
June 19, 11pm, Natal	BBC
JAPAN	
GREECE	
June 24, 9pm, Cuiaba	BBC
JAPAN	
COLOMBIA	
June 24, 9pm, Fortaleza	BBC
GREECE	
IVORY COAST	

GROUP C TABLE

Team	Pts
1	
2	
3	
4	

GROUP D

June 14, 8pm, Fortaleza	ITV
URUGUAY	
COSTA RICA	
June 14, 11pm, Manaus	BBC
ENGLAND	
ITALY	
June 19, 8pm, Sao Paulo	ITV
URUGUAY	
ENGLAND	
June 20, 5pm, Recife	BBC
ITALY	
COSTA RICA	
June 24, 5pm, Natal	ITV
ITALY	
URUGUAY	
June 24, 5pm, Belo Horizonte	ITV
COSTA RICA	
ENGLAND	

GROUP D TABLE

Team	Pts
1	
2	
3	
4	

ROUND OF 16

1. June 28, 5pm, Belo Horizonte	
WINNER A	
RUNNER-UP B	
2. June 28, 9pm, Rio de Janeiro	
WINNER C	
RUNNER-UP D	
3. June 29, 5pm, Fortaleza	
WINNER B	
RUNNER-UP A	
4. June 29, 9pm, Recife	
WINNER D	
RUNNER-UP C	
5. June 30, 5pm, Brasilia	
WINNER E	
RUNNER-UP F	
6. June 30, 9pm, Porto Alegre	
WINNER G	
RUNNER-UP H	
7. July 1, 5pm, Sao Paulo	
WINNER F	
RUNNER-UP E	
8. July 1, 9pm, Salvador	
WINNER H	
RUNNER-UP G	

QUARTER-FINALS

A. July 4, 9pm, Fortaleza	
WINNER 1	
WINNER 2	
B. July 4, 5pm, Rio de Janeiro	
WINNER 5	
WINNER 6	
C. July 5, 9pm, Salvador	
WINNER 3	
WINNER 4	
D. July 5, 5pm, Brasilia	
WINNER 7	
WINNER 8	

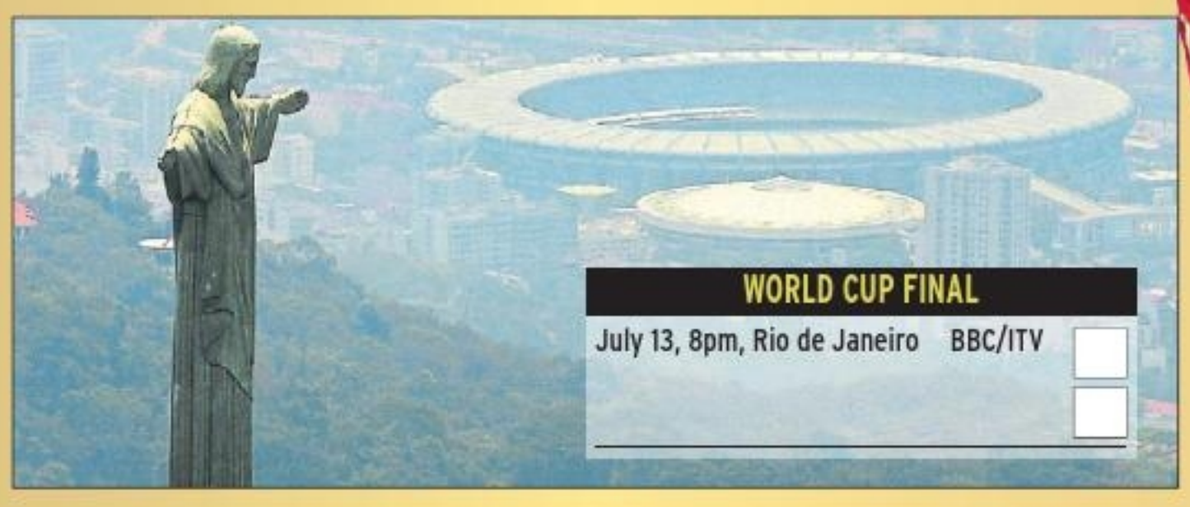
SEMI-FINALS

July 8, 9pm, Belo Horizonte	
WINNER A	
WINNER B	
July 9, 9pm, Sao Paulo	
WINNER C	
WINNER D	

3RD/4TH PLAY-OFF

July 12, 9pm, Brasilia	

All kick-off times are BST



WORLD CUP FINAL

July 13, 8pm, Rio de Janeiro	BBC/ITV

LATEST GHANA BETTING: 150/1*

CUP WALLCHART

GROUP E

June 15, 5pm, Brasilia	ITV
SWITZERLAND	
ECUADOR	
June 15, 8pm, Porto Alegre	BBC
FRANCE	
HONDURAS	
June 20, 8pm, Salvador	ITV
SWITZERLAND	
FRANCE	
June 20, 11pm, Curitiba	ITV
HONDURAS	
ECUADOR	
June 25, 9pm, Manaus	BBC
HONDURAS	
SWITZERLAND	
June 25, 9pm, Rio de Janeiro	BBC
ECUADOR	
FRANCE	

GROUP E TABLE

Team	Pts
1	
2	
3	
4	

GROUP F

June 15, 11pm, Rio de Janeiro	BBC
ARGENTINA	
BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA	
June 16, 8pm, Curitiba	BBC
IRAN	
NIGERIA	
June 21, 5pm, Belo Horizonte	ITV
ARGENTINA	
IRAN	
June 21, 11pm, Cuiaba	BBC
NIGERIA	
BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA	
June 25, 5pm, Porto Alegre	ITV
NIGERIA	
ARGENTINA	
June 25, 5pm, Salvador	ITV
BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA	
IRAN	

GROUP F TABLE

Team	Pts
1	
2	
3	
4	

GROUP G

June 16, 5pm, Salvador	ITV
GERMANY	
PORTUGAL	
June 16, 11pm, Natal	BBC
GHANA	
UNITED STATES	
June 21, 8pm, Fortaleza	BBC
GERMANY	
GHANA	
June 22, 11pm, Manaus	BBC
UNITED STATES	
PORTUGAL	
June 26, 5pm, Recife	BBC
UNITED STATES	
GERMANY	
June 26, 5pm, Brasilia	BBC
PORTUGAL	
GHANA	

GROUP G TABLE

Team	Pts
1	
2	
3	
4	

GROUP H

June 17, 5pm, Belo Horizonte	ITV
BELGIUM	
ALGERIA	
June 17, 11pm, Cuiaba	BBC
RUSSIA	
KOREA REPUBLIC	
June 22, 5pm, Rio de Janeiro	BBC
BELGIUM	
RUSSIA	
June 22, 8pm, Porto Alegre	ITV
KOREA REPUBLIC	
ALGERIA	
June 26, 9pm, Sao Paulo	ITV
KOREA REPUBLIC	
BELGIUM	
June 26, 9pm, Curitiba	ITV
ALGERIA	
RUSSIA	

GROUP H TABLE

Team	Pts
1	
2	
3	
4	

From left: Andres Iniesta (Spain), Lionel Messi (Argentina), Wayne Rooney (England), Cristiano Ronaldo (Portugal), Neymar (Brazil)

WORLD CUP WINNERS

1930	URUGUAY
1934	ITALY
1938	ITALY
1950	URUGUAY
1954	WEST GERMANY
1958	BRAZIL
1962	BRAZIL
1966	ENGLAND
1970	BRAZIL
1974	WEST GERMANY
1978	ARGENTINA
1982	ITALY
1986	ARGENTINA
1990	WEST GERMANY
1994	BRAZIL
1998	FRANCE
2002	BRAZIL
2006	ITALY
2010	SPAIN

GOLDEN BOOT WINNERS

1930	Guillermo Stabile	(Uruguay)	8
1934	Oldrich Nejedly	(Czech)	5
1938	Leonidas da Silva	(Brazil)	7
1950	Ademir	(Brazil)	8
1954	Sandor Kocsis	(Hungary)	11
1958	Just Fontaine	(France)	13
1962	Florian Albert	(Hungary)	4
	Valentin Ivanov	(Soviet Union)	4
	Garrincha	(Brazil)	4
	Vava	(Brazil)	4
	Drazan Jerkovic	(Yugoslavia)	4
	Leonel Sanchez	(Chile)	4
1966	Eusebio	(Portugal)	9
1970	Gerd Muller	(West Germany)	10
1974	Grzegorz Lato	(Poland)	7
1978	Mario Kempes	(Argentina)	6
1982	Paolo Rossi	(Italy)	6
1986	Gary Lineker	(England)	6
1990	Toto Schillachi	(Italy)	6
1994	Oleg Salenko	(Russia)	6
	Hristo Stoichkov	(Bulgaria)	6
1998	Davor Suker	(Croatia)	6
2002	Ronaldo	(Brazil)	8
2006	Miroslav Klose	(Germany)	5
2010	Thomas Muller	(Germany)	5

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Del Bosque in the hunt..again

By Mike Perez

THERE was a time when returning from the Americas with plundered treasure and a trail of vanquished opponents was a way of life for the Spanish.

However, if Spain's modern day incarnation of the conquistadors wish to return from Brazil this summer with gold in tow they will have to do something never before achieved.

In seven attempts in the history of the tournament, no European country has ever won the World Cup on the other side of the Atlantic.

Plenty have come close, with Czechoslovakia (in Chile 1962), Italy (Mexico '70 and USA '94), Holland (Argentina '78) and West Germany (Mexico '86) all reaching the final, but none have managed to take that winning step.

On top of that, no nation, European or otherwise, has ever won four successive major tournaments, which is what Spain would do if they emerge victorious on July 13.

Throw in the fact that the holders have been handed one of the toughest groups and could possibly meet hosts Brazil in the second round, and you can see the mighty challenge awaiting Vicente del Bosque's 'Golden Generation' this summer.

"We know how difficult it is to play in the World Cup and also, right from the start, with the group we have been handed," said playmaker Xavi, whose side must face Holland, Chile and Australia in Group B.

Holland were Spain's opponents in the last World Cup final, while Chile are ranked 13th in the world – above the Dutch – and almost claimed Spain's scalp, only to be denied by a late Jesus Navas equaliser in a 2-2 draw.

Spain will, therefore, have to do it the hard way if they are to defend their crown.

However, meeting challenges and overcoming them has become a hallmark of this record-breaking Spain group over the last eight years, and it would be a brave man to bet against them in Brazil.

Since November 2006, La Furia Roja have only lost three competitive matches while winning back-to-back European Championships and their maiden World Cup – becoming the first country ever to win three major tournaments in succession.

They have risen to the top of the FIFA rankings, equalled the world record of 35 successive unbeaten matches and seen David Villa become the nation's record goalscorer.

This squad has also produced nine of the 12 most capped Spanish players of all time – most of whom have either already passed 100 appearances or could have done by the end of the World Cup.

Those statistics speak volumes about why Spain have been as successful as they have, with Del Bosque and predecessor Luis Aragones able to stick with the same core of players for nearly a decade.

All good things must come to an end, though, and while Spain have plenty of promising young talent that should ensure they remain near the top of the pile in the future, this could be the last World Cup for many of their golden oldies.

The likes of Iker Casillas, Xavi, Xabi Alonso, Andres Iniesta, Fernando Torres and Villa are all in their 30s and approaching the twilights of their international careers.

If this is to be their swansong, though, all of them will be determined to go out on a high, with 32-year-old Alonso saying: "After three consecutive titles and against the competition of the other teams, it will be difficult to win the World Cup. But, honestly, whatever happens this generation to deserves to finish with dignity, with all the honours.

"Probably some players will leave the team after the World Cup. Footballers who have had very long careers. All that's missing is that this finishes well, so that they can go out with their heads held high. We don't want to experience the same story as France in the 2002 World Cup. Because that was really sad."

It seems unlikely that fate – where Les Blues, the defending champions, were embarrassingly eliminated after finishing bottom of their group with just one point and no goals from three games – awaits this all-conquering Spain group. But whether they can return from South America with more honours, records, glory and gold remains to be seen.

SPAIN

Coach Vicente Del Bosque
Tasted victory in 70 of his first 84 matches in charge, the 63-year-old is also the only coach to have won the Champions League, European Championship and World Cup.

Star man
Xavi (Barcelona)
At 34, the veteran schemer is approaching the end of his career, but his razor-sharp football brain and unparalleled passing remain undiminished.

One to watch
Andres Iniesta (Barcelona)
Unpretentious but deadly, Iniesta is effective in any number of attacking positions, great with both feet and equally adept at creating goals or scoring them.

How they qualified
Europe group winners

World Cup record

1934	Quarter-finals
1950	.4th place
1962	1st round
1966	1st round
1978	.1st round
1982	2nd round
1986	Quarter-finals
1990	Round of 16
1994	Quarter-finals
1998	1st round
2002	Quarter-finals
2006	Round of 16
2010	WINNERS

FIFA ranking 1
Stan James odds 6-1

Costa to add killer touch to tika-taka

YOU know you must be doing something right if you are at the centre of a tug-of-war between five-time World Cup winners Brazil and reigning European and world champions Spain.

That is the situation Diego Costa found himself in last year, as two of the big favourites for this summer's global showpiece battled for his services.

Brazil were the first to make their move for their home-grown striker, giving him two friendly appearances at the start of 2013.

However, it was Costa's adopted nation of Spain – where he had been playing his club football for six years – that ultimately won his allegiance and he made his debut for La Furia Roja in February's friendly against Italy.

Physical, direct, polemical and abrasive, Costa is not your identikit modern Spain player, but the in-form Atletico Madrid forward could be just the X-factor the holders may need to unlock opposition defences who have become wise to their 'tiki-taka' passing.

That is an opinion shared by Atletico coach Diego Simeone, who said: "He's a big boost for the Spanish team, because he's different to the other strikers. He's going to cause a surprise with Spain."

A successful World Cup would cap a stunning year for the 25-year-old that has seen him spearhead Atletico's bid for the Primera Division and Champions League double, scoring more than 35 goals in all competitions.

It has undoubtedly been the best season of what had been a relatively slow-burning career, until the last few years and helped catapult Costa into the very top bracket of strikers.

However, while Costa's star is high now, it has not been an easy journey to get to this point. And it could have turned out very differently, but for an incident that happened three years ago.

Following several spells away from Atletico of mixed success, he was deemed surplus to requirements at the Rojiblancos, who he first joined from Portuguese side Braga in 2007.

Having only shown glimpses of his potential at the Vicente Calderon, the talented but temperamental Costa looked set to be sold to a Turkish club in the summer of 2011 when, just prior to a Europa League qualifier against Stromsgodset, he tore the ligaments in his right knee during training.

Costa recalled: "My agent called me to go to Turkey because the club had accepted an offer. I went to training and I suffered the injury. It was very serious.

"I believe in God. We have a destiny, good and bad, and everyone plays it out. I had to start again from zero."

Costa had been dealt a cruel blow, but the battle to get fit brought out the best in him. After undergoing surgery and spending six months on the sidelines, Costa joined Atletico's local rivals Rayo Vallecano on loan, and it was there that the striker showed what he could do.

He scored four times in his first three games and ended up with 10 goals in 16 appearances. Impressive though that was, it still did not earn him a place in Atletico's plans.

"The coach told me he didn't count on me. I understood and I trained," said Costa. "My life has always been to fight and battle. It's something I have inside."

Perhaps Costa's never-say-die attitude is the reason he is recovering from another injury in time to play.

It had looked as though the footballing gods were against him again when his chances of appearing in Brazil were thrown into doubt during Atletico's title triumph at Barcelona.

The striker limped off with a recurrence of a hamstring injury early on and, although he missed the club's Champions League final with Real Madrid, he should recover in time for the start of the World Cup.

Having won Simeone over, he established himself as one of Europe's rising talents last season.

With international recognition and a big-money move in the pipeline, things could hardly be going better for Costa, but Simeone believes there is still more to come.

"He decides his limit. He must never forget what it's taken to become this player," said the Argentinian.

"We're all convinced he is a player who still has much room to grow."

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CHILE

Coach Jorge Sampaoli
Brought in to rekindle the embers of Marcelo Bielsa's team that impressed in 2010. A Bielsa disciple, he marries together an aggressive pressing game with a fluid attack-in-numbers style.

Star man
Alexis Sanchez (Barcelona)
After overcoming niggling injuries, Sanchez was back to his best at Barcelona this season with an impressive goal tally, including his first hat-trick for the club against Elche in January.

One to watch
Arturo Vidal (Juventus)
Combative in defence and creative in attack, Vidal is an all-action box-to-box midfielder who is known as Il Guerriero – 'The Warrior' – at Juventus.

How they qualified
Third, South America

World Cup record

1930	1st round
1950	1st round
1962	3rd place
1966	1st round
1974	1st round
1982	1st round
1998	Round of 16
2010	Round of 16

FIFA ranking 13
Stan James odds 40-1

NETHERLANDS

Coach Louis van Gaal
A Champions League, Bundesliga and La Liga winner at club level, the 62-year-old is in his second spell with the Oranje and will be keen to go out with a bang.

Star man
Robin van Persie (Man Utd)
Considered the main reason Manchester United won their 20th title in 2013, Van Persie was the leading scorer in European qualification, netting 11 times as the Netherlands ran away with their group.

One to watch
Jeremain Lens (Dynamo Kiev)
A versatile striker who can play anywhere across the front line, Jeremain Lens could prove to be a great foil for Robin van Persie.

How they qualified
Europe group winners

World Cup record

1934	1st round
1938	1st round
1974	Runners-up
1978	Runners-up
1990	Round of 16
1994	Quarter-finals
1998	4th place
2006	Round of 16
2010	Runners-up

FIFA ranking 15
Stan James odds 28-1

AUSTRALIA

Coach Ange Postecoglou
Following chastening defeats to France and Brazil in the past year, not many will envy the Greece-born 48-year-old as he attempts to make Australia a force to be reckoned with.

Star man
Tim Cahill (New York Red Bull)
His best days may be behind him, but the former Millwall and Everton man is still capable of catching defenders off guard, with his aerial ability a particular strength.

One to watch
Mitch Langerak (Borussia Dortmund)
Thrown in at the deep end following Chelsea goalkeeper Mark Schwarzer's sudden international retirement.

How they qualified
Asia group runners-up

World Cup record

1978	1st round
2006	Round of 16
2010	1st round

FIFA ranking 59
Stan James odds 1500-1

Chile revive spirit of Bielsa

EXPECTATIONS in Chile are as high as they have ever been – and rightly so.

Four years ago in South Africa, La Roja earned many plaudits for their style of football. The 2010 side were the work of highly-influential Argentine coach Marcelo Bielsa, who took a group of promising young players – semi-finalists in the 2007 World Youth Cup – and stamped his own personality all over them.

They pressed high, maintained a free-flowing tempo and sought to create two-against-one situations in the wide areas, a legacy that current coach Jorge Sampaoli has revived.

Their approach made them the neutrals' favourites, and their brand of football is likely to enchant a global audience again this summer.

Alexis Sanchez embodies Chile's transition. Ahead of the finals in South Africa, Sanchez was regarded as a hot prospect who was just beginning to make an impact in Serie A with Udinese.

Barcelona saw his promise and now the Spanish giants have one of the world's most exciting forwards.

In Juventus' Arturo Vidal, Chile have one of the best and arguably the most complete midfielders in the world, while Gary Medel has displayed his combative qualities for Cardiff this season.

With marauding right-back Mauricio Isla getting forward, Marcelo Diaz directing the build-up from deep and Eduardo Vargas adding a goal threat, Chile can be an irresistible spectacle.

Orange prize for friction

Can the Dutch keep it together this time?

"COULD this be the Netherlands' year?" That is one of the most-asked questions whenever a major tournament comes around.

Once it was, in the 1988 European Championship, but for all their talent it is not much of a return.

Usually they have only had themselves to blame for failing on the biggest stage, with a fractious camp full of cross-purpose egos causing them to break down.

It is hard to see Louis van Gaal allowing dissent to rule in Brazil, though and, if his side's qualifying campaign is anything to go by, they are worthy of being among the favourites. They ended with a haul of 28 points from a possible 30, with their only dropped points coming in a 2-2 draw in Estonia. They also scored 34 in 10 games, but qualifying well is nothing new. Where the Dutch struggle is converting their talented squad into a tangible reward at the tournament.

In 2010 they went closer than they had done since 1978, making the final for a third time, losing out to Spain after a bloody battle.

A trio of runners-up spots seems scant return for a nation which has produced players such as Bergkamp, Cruyff, Gullit, Kluivert, Sneijder, Van Basten and Van Der Sar, to name but a few.

Van Gaal will certainly hope to be the man who makes it all work in Brazil and it would be fitting if he did. One of the stand-out coaches of the last two decades, he is heading back to club management when the tournament is over.

He knows, too, that for all his achievements at domestic level, success with his country has evaded him. He left the job after failing to qualify for the 2002 World Cup, but the way he turned the squad around following the no-win flop of Euro 2012 suggests he might have a better chance this time around.

If his methods work, Robin van Persie fires and Wesley Sneijder is on his game, who knows what could happen?

The absence of Kevin Strootman will hurt them badly, but it could be now or never for this group of players.

Aussie fears in Group of Death

AUSTRALIA were made to work hard before sealing their third successive appearance at a World Cup finals, but their luck has been on a downward slope ever since.

Only the most optimistic of fans will have hopes of them emerging from the 'Group of Death' in Brazil.

The Socceroos have become leading contenders in the Asian Football Confederation, and sealed one of the four automatic qualification spots, although that was only guaranteed in their final group game when striker Josh Kennedy struck seven minutes from time in a 1-0 win over Iraq.

But it has been largely forgettable since. A run of four defeats in the second half of last year, including back-to-back 6-0 thrashings in Brazil and France, led to the removal of Holger Osieck as coach after three years at the helm.

He was replaced by double A-League winner Ange Postecoglou, and his competitive bow will be a baptism of fire after they were drawn with both 2010 finalists, Spain and Holland, and dark horses Chile.

In Tim Cahill and Mark Bresciano, they have seasoned campaigners who have competed at the top level and have led Australia's charge for much of the last decade, and they hope talented youngsters Tom Rogic and James Holland will play a vital part in the next generation. They have graced the Champions League this season with Celtic and Austria Vienna respectively.

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Tricolor trouble

By Andrew McDermott

COLOMBIA are back at the World Cup after a 16-year absence, but are still reeling from the absence of star striker Radamel Falcao.

Widely regarded as one of the best players in the world, the Monaco frontman has failed to recover in time from a knee injury.

Jose Pekerman described the reluctant decision to leave the 28-year-old out of his final squad as "the saddest day I've had since becoming Colombia coach".

Colombia must now prove they are more than a one-man team.

Los Cafeteros made three successive World Cup tournaments in the 1990s when they were able to call upon the likes of flamboyant goalkeeper Rene Higuita, unmistakable midfielder Carlos Valderrama and enigmatic forward Faustino Asprilla. They have failed to replace such larger-than-life characters – until now. With experienced figures Mario Yepes, Cristian Zapata and Fredy Guarin complemented by blossoming talents such as James Rodriguez, there is hope they can go far.

Incredibly, one member of their 1998 squad will again be on duty in Brazil. Goalkeeper Farid Mondragon turns 43 during the tournament and will become the oldest ever World Cup player if he is called upon. Colombia's road to Brazil showcased both their attacking talent and defensive resolve.

Pekerman's Tricolor battered Uruguay 4-0 and demolished Bolivia 5-0, while holding Argentina to a goalless draw. Arguably their most impressive result was the point which clinched their World Cup berth as they rallied from three goals down to draw 3-3 with Chile.

The ecstasy which greeted that result in October turned to despair three months later when Falcao, who had scored more than 70 goals in the previous two seasons with Atletico Madrid, injured a knee, and the team already have their excuse if they fail.

But for a nation whose World Cup history is sadly linked with tragedy, after defender Andres Escobar was murdered following his own goal in 1994, Colombia could provide an uplifting story.

COLOMBIA

Coach Jose Pekerman
Coached Argentina in 2006 when they went out in the last eight. Has a track record of developing the next generation, and is the man who gave Lionel Messi his international debut.

Star man
James Rodriguez (Monaco)
Seen as Colombia's creative force and brightest young talent. Had a highly successful stint at Porto before a 45 million euros move to Monaco.

One to watch
Adrian Ramos (Hertha Berlin)
Colombia will look to the 28-year-old for goals now Radamel Falcao is out.

How they qualified
Africa play-off winners

World Cup record

1982	1st round
1986	1st round
2010	1st round

FIFA ranking 5
Stan James odds 28-1

James Rodriguez will have to take on Radamel Falcao's mantle in Brazil

Zac's aces could set finals alight

JAPAN were the first nation to qualify for the finals and this stylish team appears to be brimming with confidence under their veteran Italian coach, Alberto Zaccheroni.

It will be Japan's fifth successive appearance, and they were within a penalty shootout loss to Paraguay of reaching the quarter-finals last time in South Africa.

A repeat is no certainty, but it is well within Japan's reach, and former AC Milan manager Zaccheroni has his sights on making a big impact. "Just qualifying is not enough," he said. "We will aim even higher in Brazil."

Japanese football has been smitten with Zaccheroni since he instructed local media to "call me Zac" when he succeeded Takeshi Okada after South Africa 2010.

Progress from the preliminary group was laboured, but fourth place at London 2012 restored the Blue Samurais' poise and resounding wins over Oman and Jordan got the final qualifying stage off to a wonderful start, Jordan dispatched 6-0 on the back of a Keisuke Honda hat-trick. Jordan would earn a surprise return win, meaning Japan needed a repeat of their draw with Australia earlier in the phase to progress.

They got just that and now, led by Zaccheroni, Honda, Shinji Kagawa, Shinji Okazaki and Yasuhito Endo, Japan could prove to be one of the hottest tickets in town.

JAPAN

Coach Alberto Zaccheroni
The former AC Milan manager has moulded an ambitious attacking unit around the talents of Shinji Kagawa and Keisuke Honda.

Star man
Keisuke Honda (AC Milan)
The heir to Hidetoshi Nakata and Shunsuke Nakamura, Honda is a playmaker with game-changing ability that can lift his country to a new level.

One to watch
Shinji Kagawa (Man Utd)
Made his name in Jurgen Klopp's brilliant Dortmund side, but has had limited chances at Manchester United.

How they qualified
Asia group winners

World Cup record

1998	1st round
2002	Round of 16
2006	1st round
2010	Round of 16

FIFA ranking 47
Stan James odds 150-1

Drogba ready to lead a final fling

THIS summer's World Cup presents perhaps the final chance for Ivory Coast's golden generation to make their presence felt on the biggest stage.

French coach Sabri Lamouchi will oversee a vastly talented group, spearheaded by Galatasaray striker Didier Drogba and Manchester City midfield powerhouse Yaya Toure.

Yet they have not gone beyond the group stage at a World Cup, and nor does possibly the most talented group ever assembled from their continent have an African Cup of Nations win.

The problem now is that Drogba and Toure, along with the latter's elder brother Kolo, Didier Zakora, Emmanuel Eboue and enigmatic goalkeeper Boubacar Barry, are all in their 30s.

Younger attacking talents such as Wilfried Bony, Seydou Doumbia and Lacina Traore show the production line is still working, but they will do well to outshine those they will ultimately replace.

Former Chelsea man Salomon Kalou is another vital cog and, now enjoying a new lease of life at Lille, it was the 28-year-old who scored in both legs of the 4-2 play-off win that saw Ivory Coast book their finals place at Senegal's expense.

IVORY COAST

Coach Sabri Lamouchi
A student of Jose Mourinho's, Lamouchi is a managerial rookie after a distinguished playing career with Inter Milan, Monaco and Marseille.

Star man
Yaya Toure (Man City)
An accomplished holding player with Barcelona, Toure has transformed into an all-action midfield powerhouse at Manchester City.

One to watch
Wilfried Bony (Swansea)
Viewed by some as the long-term heir to Drogba, and goes into the World Cup on the back of a good season.

How they qualified
Africa play-off winners

World Cup record

2006	1st round
2010	1st round

FIFA ranking 21
Stan James odds 150-1

Santos' Greeks tough to crack

IT is a decade since Greece stunned the rest of Europe by winning the Euro 2004 in Portugal, courtesy of a string of 1-0 wins – but anyone under-estimating them at this World Cup could again do so at their peril.

Today's Greece is built on the same strong defensive foundations as the class of 2004. They conceded only four times in their 10 qualifying games en route to Brazil, keeping a remarkable eight clean sheets.

However, after missing out on top spot to Bosnia-Herzegovina on goal difference, Fernando Santos' men needed to see off Romania in a play-off, which they did 4-2 on aggregate.

Borussia Dortmund star Sokratis Papastathopoulos is at the heart of that stingy unit which, as they famously did in Portugal, appears to have mastered the art of narrow victories.

Midfielders Georgios Karagounis and Konstantinos Katsouranis have well over 200 caps between them and can pass on a wealth of knowledge to their younger team-mates.

Up front, both Konstantinos Mitroglou and Georgios Samaras have enjoyed prolific spells at club level in ther time.

Greece are hoping that they can now progress to the knockout stage at the third time of asking. Once there, as they proved 10 years ago, anything is possible.

GREECE

Coach Fernando Santos
The Portuguese is well-versed in Greek football having taken charge of AEK Athens, Panathinaikos and PAOK before succeeding Otto Rehhagel.

Star man
Georgios Karagounis (Fulham)
A central midfielder who plays with his heart on his sleeve, Karagounis is his country's captain and record cap-holder.

One to watch
Konstantinos Mitroglou (Fulham)
Grabbed the goals to qualify with three in the two-legged play-off victory over Romania.

How they qualified
Europe play-off winners

World Cup record

1994	1st round
2010	1st round

FIFA ranking 10
Stan James odds 200-1

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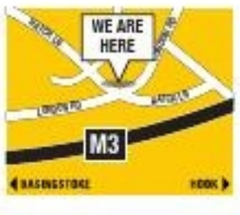

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Ecuador bid to honour Benitez's memory

THE World Cup will be tinged with sadness for Ecuador, who will play in the memory of striker Christian Benitez after he tragically died during the qualifying campaign.

Benitez, known as Chucho by his team-mates, passed away last June aged 27 following a cardiac arrest he suffered shortly after moving to Qatar to play for El Jaish.

He had been a key player in earning La Tricolor's place at the tournament with four goals in qualifying and Ecuador retired his No.11 jersey as a mark of respect.

With the motivation of honouring the 58-time capped striker (pictured), Ecuador go into the tournament aiming to improve on their best performance to date, when they reached the last 16 at Germany 2006.

They were knocked out by England after beating Poland and Costa Rica, but their experience of the testing conditions in South America make them tricky opponents.

Their draw looks favourable on paper and it could be the most open group in the competition, giving Reinaldo Rueda's men a real chance of progress.

Seven qualifying home wins and a draw with Argentina in Quito made sure of their place in the draw, with former Manchester City, Malaga and now Al-Jazira forward Felipe Caicedo leading the goalscoring charts with seven.

Can Karim finally rise to the top?

IF France are to fulfil their potential, Karim Benzema will have to do likewise.

Coach Didier Deschamps has favoured a 4-3-3/4-5-1 hybrid formation, with Benzema as the focal point, supported by Franck Ribery and Mathieu Valbuena.

That will place fierce scrutiny on a man going into his first World Cup, and whose fluctuating confidence makes him unpredictable.

Benzema scored nine minutes into his debut, against Austria in 2007, and has 19 goals in 65 caps.

But he went 16 months without an international goal before he finally found the net in last October's 6-0 friendly win over Australia.

He only scored once in qualifying, but added a half-volley in March's friendly win over Holland, admitting: "A few months ago, it might have gone over the bar."

Benzema's performance in that 2-0 win impressed Deschamps, who said afterwards: "When he plays at that level it is great for us. Let's hope he can keep it up. You can see it on his face. He is beaming and that is because he is confident."

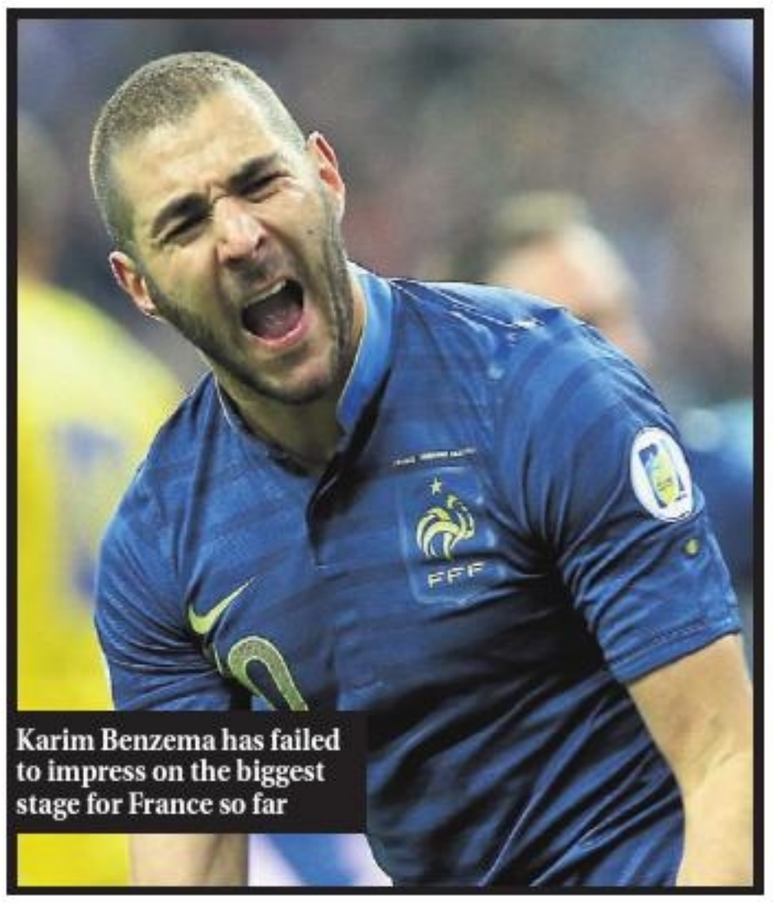
Having been left out of France's wretched 2010 campaign in South Africa, Benzema will be desperate to seize his chance.

His record in European championships is far from impressive, having failed to score in six appearances.

And having been dropped in favour of Arsenal's Olivier Giroud during qualifying and with Loic Remy, who excelled on loan at Newcastle, also in contention, the 26-year-old will know there is no margin for error this time around.

Transfer speculation surrounds him, and Giroud could even be a future club-mate, with the Gunners linked with a possible bid.

A stellar performance in Brazil could increase both the fee and his prospective salary should Real opt to cash in.



Karim Benzema has failed to impress on the biggest stage for France so far

FRANCE

Coach Didier Deschamps
Captained France to victory in 1998, and now aims to emulate Franz Beckenbauer in lifting the trophy as manager and player.

Star man
Franck Ribery (B Munich)
Champions League winner in 2013, he was third in the 2013 Ballon D'Or behind Lionel Messi and Cristiano Ronaldo.

One to watch
Karim Benzema (Real Madrid)
Despite struggling to match club form for his national team – scoring only once in seven qualifying games – the 26-year-old has the qualities to trouble any defence.

How they qualified
Europe play-off winners

World Cup record

1930	1st round
1934	1st round
1938	Quarter-finals
1954	1st round
1958	3rd place
1966	1st round
1978	1st round
1982	4th place
1986	3rd place
1998	WINNERS
2002	1st round
2006	Runners-up
2010	1st round

FIFA ranking 16
Stan James odds 22-1

Swiss seeds are ready to bloom

VETERAN coach Ottmar Hitzfeld will hope the youthful verve of his Switzerland squad can provide one last hurrah in his much-decorated career.

Hitzfeld, whose honours include Champions League triumphs at the helm of German giants Borussia Dortmund and Bayern Munich, is set to retire at the end of the competition, bringing down the curtain on an excellent six-year period with the Swiss national team.

Having suffered the humiliation of elimination at the group stage of Euro 2008, despite being co-hosts, Switzerland turned to Hitzfeld in the aftermath.

It paid instant dividends as they topped their 2010 World Cup qualifying group and went on to send shockwaves through the game with a 1-0 triumph over Spain in their opening game, when Gelson Fernandes' goal saw off the European champions and eventual winners.

It proved a relatively false dawn, as Switzerland failed to progress from the group stage and fell short in qualification for Euro 2012.

But Hitzfeld's men left little doubt that lessons had been learned with an emphatic march to Brazil, topping UEFA Group E with 24 points from 10 unbeaten games in their qualifying group.

Switzerland were both ruthlessly efficient and easy on the eye in qualification, with seasoned performers such as Tranquillo Barnetta, Gokhan Inler and Philippe Senderos providing a solid, established core that allowed exciting youngsters Xherdan Shaqiri, Granit Xhaka, Fabian Schar and Valentin Stocker to flourish.

Bengston sets his sights on a first for Honduras

HONDURAS arrive in Brazil on a journey of rejuvenation four years on from their appearance in South Africa.

Their 2010 World Cup campaign ended in disappointment, with Los Catrachos failing to win a single game or score a goal, but the appointment of Luis Fernando Suarez in March 2011 accelerated an upward trajectory.

After a respectable quarter-final appearance at the 2012 London Olympics, Honduras blended a mix of youth and experience for the CONCACAF qualifiers.

They topped round three in preliminary qualifying ahead of Panama and, in round four, easily made it to Brazil by finishing third, four points ahead of Mexico.

Their home form claimed the scalps of both the United States and Costa Rica, who finished first and second respectively, while a 2-2 draw at home to Mexico was earned by goals from Carlo Costly and Jerry Bengtson.

The most famous result for Honduras, though, came in the return fixture. Trailing 1-0 at half-time, Bengtson and Costly struck again to earn Honduras an historic win. The defeat was only the second at home for Mexico in 78 World Cup qualifying matches.

Results like that will give Honduras confidence in Group E, but they will have to do something they did not manage in 1982 or 2010 – win a World Cup match. With the likes of Bengtson and Costly in goalscoring form, they go with confidence.

ECUADOR

Coach Reinaldo Rueda
Colombia-born Rueda took charge in 2010 after four years with Honduras, in which time his former charges qualified for the previous World Cup in South Africa.

Star man
Antonio Valencia (Man Utd)
Former El Nacional youth and Wigan winger joined Manchester United in 2009 and won the club's player-of-the-year award three years later.

One to watch
Felipe Caicedo (Al-Jazira)
The 25-year-old left-footed striker was Ecuador's top scorer in World Cup qualifying and is versatile in that he can also play in the middle or on the wing. A full international since 2005.

How they qualified
Fourth, South America

World Cup record

2002	1st round
2006	Round of 16

FIFA ranking 28
Stan James odds 150-1

SWITZERLAND

Coach Ottmar Hitzfeld
Elder statesman of European football bringing down the curtain on a stellar career. Led both Borussia Dortmund and Bayern Munich to Champions League glory.

Star man
Gokhan Inler (Napoli)
Experienced midfielder is captain and heartbeat of his national team. A superb striker of the ball, he has a taste for the spectacular when given the chance to let fly.

One to watch
Xherdan Shaqiri (B Munich)
Had a brief taste of World Cup action in 2010 as an 18-year-old. Not a regular starter for Bayern Munich so should arrrive fresh and with a point to prove.

How they qualified
Europe group winners

World Cup record

1934	Quarter-finals
1938	Quarter-finals
1950	1st round
1954	Quarter-finals
1962	1st round
1966	1st round
1994	Round of 16
2006	Round of 16
2010	1st round

FIFA ranking 8
Stan James odds 120-1

HONDURAS

Coach Luis Fernando Suarez
Suarez has managed to mix youth and experience to great effect since taking charge in 2011 and guided Honduras to the Olympic quarter-finals in London two years ago.

Star man
Jerry Bengston (New England Revolution)
Has proven international pedigree, scoring three goals at London 2012 and he also netted crucial goals home and away against Mexico in qualifying.

One to watch
Emilio Izaguirre (Celtic)
The left-back already has World Cup experience having played in South Africa in 2010, which earned him a move to Scottish giants Celtic.

How they qualified
Third, Concacaf

World Cup record

1982	1st round
2010	1st round

FIFA ranking 30
Stan James odds 3000-1

LATEST GERMANY BETTING: 6/1*
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Mach Bhaja
Bangladeshi sweet water fish fried with onion, capsicum & tomato
Price: £ 3.95

Bhuna King Prawn Puree
King Prawns cooked in a medium spicy sweet and sour sauce with soft puffy bread
Price: £ 3.95

King Prawn Butterfly
King Prawns marinated in a spicy sauce and deep fried in batter
Price: £ 3.95

King Prawn Chooka
Fried King Prawn with a sweet and spicy tamarind sauce
Price: £ 3.75

Prawn Puree
Medium spiced prawns served with soft puffy bread
Price: £ 3.25

Samosa
Triangular crispy fried pastry stuffed with spicy minced meat or vegetable
Price: £ 2.75

Batak Tikka
Tender pieces of duck marinated in herbs and spices and cooked in the Tandoor
Price: £ 3.95

Sheekh Kebab
Minced filled of lamb marinated in kebab spices and fresh herbs, barbecued in the Tandoor and served with salad
Price: £ 2.95

Shamee Kebab
Marinated minced lamb mixed with herbs to our own recipe and served with salad
Price: £ 2.95

Chicken or Lamb Tikka
Prime lamb or chicken marinated in Tikka spiced sauce and yoghurt and cooked in a clay oven
Price: £ 2.95

Chicken Pakura
Fried pieces of chicken in garlic flavoured spicy sauce
Price: £ 2.95

Chicken Sathay
Boneless piece of chicken marinated in sweet spices and cooked in the Tandoor
Price: £ 2.95

Reshmi Kebab
Marinated minced lamb shallow fried and served with an omelette.
Price: £ 2.95

TANDOORI DISHES

Tandoori Platter
Piece of chicken and lamb tikka, sheikh kebab, tandoori chicken, onion bhajee, served with nan bread and salad
Price: £ 9.95

Tandoori Chicken
(Half)
Price: £ 5.95

Tandoori Chicken
(Full)
Price: £ 9.95

Chicken Shaslic / Lamb Shaslic
Chicken or lamb with fresh herbs, tomato, capsicum, onion, cooked in clay oven, served with salad and nan bread
Price: £ 9.95

Chicken or Lamb Tikka
Boneless spicy tikka cooked in clay oven with capsicum, onion and tomato, served with salad
Price: £ 6.50

Tandoori King Prawn
Pieces of tandoori king prawn served with salad
Price: £ 9.95

Duck Tikka
Boneless breast duck pieces cooked in clay oven with capsicum, onion and tomato served with salad
Price: £ 9.95

SEAFOOD DISHES

Prawn Curry
Medium spiced with sauce
Price: £ 5.95

King Prawn Curry
Medium spiced with sauce
Price: £ 7.95

Prawn Madras
Prawns cooked in a fairly hot spiced sauce
Price: £ 5.95

King Prawn Madras
King Prawns cooked in a fairly hot spiced sauce
Price: £ 8.25

Prawn Vindaloo
King Prawns cooked in a very hot spicy sauce
Price: £ 5.95

Bhoona Prawns
Prawns cooked with specially blended spices in a thick sauce
Price: £ 6.25

Bhoona King Prawn
King Prawns cooked with specially blended spices in a thick sauce
Price: £ 8.50

Prawn Sag
Cooked with specially blended spices in a thick sauce
Price: £ 6.25

King Prawn Sag
King Prawns cooked with specially blended spices in a thick sauce
Price: £ 8.50

Kurma Prawns
Prawns cooked in a very mild curry sauce with fresh cream, almonds and coconut
Price: £ 6.25

King Prawn Kurma
King Prawns cooked in a very mild curry sauce with fresh cream, almonds and coconut
Price: £ 8.50

King Prawn Karai
Price: £ 8.95

King Prawn Jalfrazi
Price: £ 8.95

Mach Bhoona
Bangladeshi sweet water fish (Ayer) cooked in a special blend of fish spices
Price: £ 9.95

PERSIAN DISHES

Patia (Sweet, sour and hot) *Cooked with spices and tomato in thick sauce, Chicken or Meat Patia*
Served with pilau rice.
Price: £ 8.95

Prawn Patia
Served with pilau rice
Price: £ 8.95

King Prawn
Served with pilau rice
Price: £ 9.95

Chicken Dhansak
Dhansak (Sweet, sour and hot) Diced chicken or meat cooked with spiced lentils
Price: £ 8.95

Prawn Dhansak
Dhansak (Sweet, sour and hot) Diced chicken or meat cooked with spiced lentils
Price: £ 8.95

King Prawn Dhansak
Dhansak (Sweet, sour and hot) Diced chicken or meat cooked with spiced lentils
Price: £ 9.95

Meat Dhansak
Dhansak (Sweet, sour and hot) Diced chicken or meat cooked with spiced lentils
Price: £ 8.95

SPECIAL DUCK DISHES

Duck Masala
Pieces of marinated duck cooked *in medium thick sauce with home made spices*
Price: £ 9.95

Duck Rozella
Sour and hot, marinated in special spice, cooked with garlic herbs and green chilli
Price: £ 9.95

Duck Bhuna (medium)
Diced duck tikka, cooked in specially blended spices, in a thick sauce
Price: £ 9.95

CHICKEN OR MEAT CURRY DISHES

Chicken Curry (medium hot)
Diced pieces of chicken or lamb cooked with medium spices and sauce
Price: £ 4.95

Chicken Madras (fairly hot)
Diced chicken or lamb cooked in fairly hot spices
Price: £ 5.50

Chicken Vindaloo (hot)
Diced chicken or lamb cooked in very hot spices
Price: £ 5.50

Chicken Chilli Masala (fairly hot)
Diced chicken or lamb with fresh green chilli in hot and sour spices
Price: £ 6.50

Chicken Kurma (very mild)
Pieces of chicken cooked with fresh cream, coconut, almond and sultanas
Price: £ 5.50

Chicken Dupiaza (medium)
Diced chicken cooked in medium spices with fresh onion
Price: £ 5.50

Chicken Bhuna (medium)
Diced chicken cooked in specially blended spices in thick sauce
Price: £ 5.50

Chicken Jalfrazi (fairly hot)
Diced chicken marinated with fresh ground spices and sauteed with tomato and onion and capsicum in medium thick sauce
Price: £ 6.95

Meat Curry (medium hot)
Diced pieces of chicken or lamb cooked with medium spices and sauce
Price: £ 4.95

Meat Madras (fairly hot)
Diced chicken or lamb cooked in fairly hot spices
Price: £ 5.50

Meat Vindaloo (hot)
Diced chicken or lamb cooked in very hot spices
Price: £ 5.50

Meat Chilli Masala (fairly hot)
Diced chicken or lamb with fresh green chilli in hot and sour spices
Price: £ 6.50

Meat Kurma (very mild)
Pieces of chicken cooked with fresh cream, coconut, almond and sultanas
Price: £ 5.50

Meat Dupiaza (medium)
Diced chicken cooked in medium spices with fresh onion
Price: £ 5.50

Meat Bhuna (medium)
Diced chicken cooked in specially blended spices in thick sauce
Price: £ 5.50

Meat Jalfrazi (fairly hot)
Diced chicken marinated with fresh ground spices and sauteed with tomato and onion and capsicum in medium thick sauce
Price: £ 6.95

BALTI DISHES

Meat Balti
Cooked with real balti spice imported from North India, served with nan or roti
Price: £ 7.95

Prawn Balti
Cooked with real balti spice imported from North India, served with nan or roti
Price: £ 8.50

King Prawn Balti
Cooked with real balti spice imported from North India, served with nan or roti
Price: £ 9.95

Duck Balti
Cooked with real balti spice imported from North India, served with nan or roti
Price: £ 9.95

Chicken Balti
Cooked with real balti spice imported from North India, served with nan or roti.
Price: £ 7.95

BIRIANI DISHES

Meat Biriani
Mixed with basmati rice & mildly spice, fried and dressed with tomato & cucumber. Served with vegetable curry
Price: £ 8.50

Chicken Biriani
Mixed with basmati rice & mildly spice, fried and dressed with tomato & cucumber. Served with vegetable curry
Price: £ 8.50

Prawn Biriani
Mixed with basmati rice & mildly spice, fried and dressed with tomato & cucumber. Served with vegetable curry
Price: £ 8.50

King Prawn Biriani
Mixed with basmati rice & mildly spice, fried and dressed with tomato & cucumber. Served with vegetable curry
Price: £ 9.95

Mashrom Biriani
Mixed with basmati rice & mildly spice, fried and dressed with tomato & cucumber. Served with vegetable curry
Price: £ 5.95

Vegetable Biriani
Mixed with basmati rice & mildly spice, fried and dressed with tomato & cucumber. Served with vegetable curry
Price: £ 5.95

Tandoori Chicken Biriani
Flavoured tandoori chicken mixed with basmati rice and mildly spiced, fried and dressed with tomato and cucumber, served with vegetable curry.
Price: £ 8.95

SPECIALITIES OF THE HOUSE

Roshi Chicken
Tender pieces of chicken marinated in a spicy garlic flavored thick sauce
Price: £ 7.95

Gosht Kata Masala
Tender pieces of lamb marinated in special spices, cooked with soy sauce, served with special fried rice
Price: £ 8.95

Chicken or Lamb Passanda
Tandoori flavored pieces of chicken or sliced lamb cooked in exotic creamy sauce with ground nuts and sultanas served with special fried rice
Price: £ 8.95

Chicken or Lamb Makhani (Mild)
Pieces of barbecued chicken or lamb tossed with cultured yoghurt, fresh cream and almond
Price: £ 7.95

King Prawn Delight
Whole king prawns, cooked in special mild sauce
Price: £ 9.95

Chicken Khakry
Sliced chicken cooked with fresh tomato, capsicum & special spices
Price: £ 7.95

Chicken or Lamb Tikka Masala (Mild)
A wonderful combination of flavors, barbecued chicken or lamb cooked in mildly spiced oriental sauce with fresh cream
Price: £ 7.55

Special Chicken Korma
Special home made very mild spicy and sweet sauce, served with mango chutney
Price: £ 7.55

Chicken or Lamb Naga (Very Hot)
Tender pieces of chicken or lamb marinated in a spicy thick sauce with very hot flavored and scented Bangladeshi red naga chilli
Price: £ 7.95

Chicken or Lamb Shathkora
Tender pieces of chicken or lamb marinated in a spicy thick sauce with shathkora Bangladeshi citrus vegetable
Price: £ 7.95

Murogi Raj
Tandoori flavored chicken on the bone cooked with fresh onion, capsicum and tomato
Price: £ 7.95

Chicken Raj Bahari
Barbecued chicken diced into very fine pieces and then fried and added to a specially blended house made sweet tangy, and slight sour sauce.
Price: £ 9.95

Ginger Chicken
A Punjabi speciality, chicken cooked with fresh ginger, red and green capsicum in a hot spicy sauce (fairly hot).
Price: £ 9.95

Chicken/Lamb Joypuri
Chicken or lamb cooked green peppers and onions and hard boiled egg with fresh herbs and spices in a Medium sauce.
Price: £ 9.95

King Prawn Zinger
King prawn cooked with fresh mushrooms tomatoes and green peppers in a sweet and sour sauce served on a platter.
Price: £ 9.95

Shim Chicken/Lamb
Chicken cooked with Bangladeshi beans and tomatoes.
Price: £ 9.95

RICE

Boiled Rice
Price: £ 2.10

Pilau Rice
Basmati rice fried in ghee flavoured to a special recipe
Price: £ 2.50

Peas Pilau
Pilau rice fried with peas
Price: £ 2.75

Special Fried Rice
Pilau rice fried with peas, egg & almond
Price: £ 2.75

Mushroom Pilau Rice
Pilau rice fried with fresh mashrooms
Price: £ 2.75

Mixed Fried Rice
Pilau rice fried with chick peas, onion and covered with omelette
Price: £ 2.75

Coconut Rice
Pilau rice fried with fresh coconut.
Price: £ 2.75

Keema Rice
pilau rice fried with fresh mince meat.
Price: £ 2.75

BREAD

Nan
Leavened bread baked in Tandoor
Price: £ 1.95

Cheese Nan
Nan stuffed with cheese
Price: £ 2.25

Chicken Nan
Nan stuffed with chicken
Price: £ 2.25

Keema Nan
Nan stuffed with spiced mince meat
Price: £ 2.25

Vegetable Nan
Nan stuffed with vegetables
Price: £ 2.25

Peshwari Nan
Nan stuffed with nuts and sultanas
Price: £ 2.25

Paratha
Unleavened fried thick bread
Price: £ 2.25

Vegetable Paratha
Paratha stuffed with vegetables
Price: £ 2.25

SET MEAL FOR TWO

Meat Curry Chicken Tikka Massala, Special Pilau Rice, 1 Nan Bread, 1 Onion Bhaji, 1 Chicken Tikka (Starter)
Price: £ 19.95

Chapati
Unleavened bread
Price: £ 1.25

VEGETABLE SIDE DISHES

Mixed Vegetable Curry
Mixed fresh vegetables cooked with herbs in a rich sauce
Price: £ 2.95

Chilli Vegetables
Vegetables cooked with chilli
Price: £ 2.95

Mushroom Bhajee
Fresh mushroom cooked in a medium spices with onion
Price: £ 2.95

Cauliflower Bhajee
Fresh cauliflower cooked in a medium sauce
Price: £ 2.95

Sag Aloo
Fresh spinach cooked with potato in medium spices
Price: £ 2.95

Bombay Aloo
Sauteed potato cooked in slightly hot spices with onion and spices
Price: £ 2.95

Bhindi Bhaje
Fresh okra (ladies finger) cooked onion, herbs and spices
Price: £ 2.95

Sag Bhajee
Fresh Spinach cooked with onion in a medium spices
Price: £ 2.95

Aloo Gobi
Fresh cauliflower and potatoes cooked dry with chopped onion and tomato
Price: £ 2.95

Aloo Peas
Sauteed potatoes and peas cooked dry in medium spices
Price: £ 2.95

Tarka Dal
Lentils cooked with herbs and spices and flavored with garlic
Price: £ 2.95

Badami Vegetables
Vegetables cooked with chestnuts
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Messi's chance to join greats

By Matt Hardisty

LIONEL MESSI will be facing up to a new type of pressure when he lines up for Argentina against Bosnia and Herzegovina on June 15 at the Maracana.

For almost a decade, the eyes of the world have fallen on the man from Rosario as he dazzled everyone as the talisman of a Barcelona side who dominated club football.

Since making his debut in 2004, Messi has won three Champions League titles, six Primera Division titles and the Ballon d'Or for four consecutive years from 2009 to 2012.

Messi is not 27 until June 24, the day before Argentina face Nigeria in their final Group F game in Brazil.

But despite achieving all that before the age that most of us mere mortals are working out what we want to do, never mind being the best at it, the crown is beginning to slip in the eyes of some.

This year, the Ballon d'Or, the title given to the player regarded as the best in the world, was handed to Real Madrid's Cristiano Ronaldo.

Two months on the sidelines from November until January this season did not help his cause and Messi was without a League goal in open play from September until February, including an almost unheard of run of four games without scoring either side of his injury.

That led to some criticism in Spain and even led Barca coach Gerardo Martino to leap to the defence of his star man, saying: "Those that are negative do not realise they are affecting his pride. When you do that to the world's best player, this is what happens."

Back-to-back hat-tricks against Osasuna and Real Madrid were the high point of a return to normal service before seemingly lacklustre performances against Atletico Madrid in the Champions League quarter-finals and Real in the Copa del Rey final.

So is Messi coming into this World Cup out of form? Hardly. His goals-to-games ratio this season is around one to one, a drop-off from the past two years, but that fact just shows what sort of level Messi is operating on.

Imagine if Wayne Rooney had been scoring at that pace for Manchester United this season. In the minds of many English fans, the bunting would already be up, the champagne on ice and England on their way to a certain World Cup victory.

The Argentina captain must know this tournament in Brazil offers him the chance to join the ranks of the true greats of the game.

Many already regard him to be in the same bracket as Pele and Diego Maradona but, for some, only a win on the very biggest stage will catapult him into that company.

It is easy to see why that is, as many of the players who sit just below Pele and Maradona in the all-time hierarchy do not have a World Cup to their name.

Being Northern Irish meant George Best never had the chance to compete for the sport's greatest prize, while Johan Cruyff was at the epicentre of a Dutch team which brushed all before them aside on the way to the 1974 final before being defeated by West Germany.

Messi was the beating heart of Argentina's team in South Africa four years ago and earned himself a Golden Ball nomination on their run to the quarter-finals, but crucially failed to score.

Now he travels to Brazil knowing leading his country to World Cup glory would raise him from the level of one of the best there has ever been to the very top table.

Pele. Maradona. Messi? We may find out on July 13.

ARGENTINA

Coach Alejandro Sabella
Although not the popular choice to succeed Sergio Batista in August 2011, the former Sheffield United and Leeds United midfielder has already won over many of his critics.

Star man
Lionel Messi (Barcelona)
Spectacular goalscoring feats mark him out as the outstanding player of his generation. The winner of four successive Ballon d'Or awards, his ability to run with the ball and change direction at top speed is unparalleled. Has lifted the game to new heights at Barcelona.

One to watch
Ezequiel Garay (Benfica)
The defender has emerged as a towering presence during qualifying and has played a key role in their transformation into genuine contenders.

How they qualified
First, South America

World Cup record

1930	Runners-up
1934	1st round
1958	1st round
1962	1st round
1966	Quarter-finals
1974	2nd round
1978	WINNERS
1982	2nd round
1986	WINNERS
1990	Runners-up
1994	Round of 16
1998	Quarter-finals
2002	1st round
2006	Quarter-finals
2010	Quarter-finals

FIFA ranking 7
Stan James odds 4-1

Many believe Lionel Messi has to win a World Cup before he can be considered equal among Pele and Diego Maradona

Can Sabella make up for lost time?

By Matt Hardisty

ALEJANDRO SABELLA and Diego Maradona could not be a great deal more different.

At the 2010 World Cup in South Africa the larger-than-life Maradona, as he had been for over 30 years, was the figure that dominated Argentinian football.

The country's greatest ever player was now the head coach and, despite having the man regarded as the best player on the planet at the time with Lionel Messi in his side, the media circus was still very much about Maradona.

Argentina exited in the quarter-finals and Maradona's contract was not renewed, ending a controversial two-year spell at the helm.

There is little chance of controversy in Brazil under Sabella as the man who has spent the bulk of his career flying under the radar attempts to lead his country to glory.

Sabella began his playing career in 1974 with River Plate before moving to England and Sheffield United after the Blades failed in an audacious bid to sign Maradona. A single season at Leeds followed before a return home and five years playing for Estudiantes, the club he would go on to manage almost 25 years later. In fact, Sabella did not get his first big break in management until he went back to his former club in 2009, but it could never be said that he had not earned his stripes.

> "One of his first moves was to make Messi skipper"

Following his retirement from playing in 1989, Sabella began to work under Daniel Passarella and formed a relationship that would see him coach in his native Argentina, Uruguay, Italy, Mexico and Brazil.

The eight-cap international never played in a World Cup, but he found himself on the biggest stage in 1998 when, as part of Passarella's staff, he was with the national team. Argentina got through the group stage without conceding but, after dispatching England on penalties in the last 16, lost to Holland as Dennis Bergkamp scored one of the most memorable goals the competition has ever seen.

It would be 11 years before Sabella got his chance back at the club where he won two League titles, but he took no time in making an impact once he arrived, guiding them to Copa Libertadores and Apertura wins before leaving in February 2011.

That summer he was due to take up a post in the Middle East but, following Argentina's quarter-final exit in the Copa America, manager Sergio Batista was dismissed and Sabella had the biggest job in Argentinian football.

One of his first moves was to make Messi his captain with many believing the Barcelona playmaker had flattered to deceive when playing for his country. The skipper rewarded his boss with 10 goals in 16 games as Argentina topped the Conmebol standings to ease their way to Brazil 2014.

Messi's flourishing could be the key this summer as he takes the spotlight off his boss – a coach who took his time to become a manager but could quite possibly be on the brink of winning the biggest prize in football.

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Bosnian fans celebrate in Sarajevo after the win over Lithuania that secured their first qualification for the World Cup finals

Fiery Dragons

Susic's Bosnians ready to make an impact

By Andrew McDermott

BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA'S passage to the World Cup already represents a remarkable achievement for a country that only played its first FIFA-recognised international in November 1995.

After two qualifying campaigns for international tournaments had previously ended in play-off agony, the Dragons booked their place in Brazil after topping their qualifying group, edging out Greece on goal difference.

It was an overdue success after their previous narrow disappointments.

During qualifying for the 2010 World Cup, Bosnia-Herzegovina finished second behind Spain in their group after scoring an impressive 25 goals – just three less than the eventual champions.

Edin Dzeko finished joint second in the European goalscoring charts with nine goals, but failed to replicate that form in the play-offs when they were defeated 2-0 on aggregate by Portugal.

Their free-scoring football and attacking verve continued in qualifying for Euro 2012, where they outscored everybody in their group, but the pressure of expectation weighed heavily.

The Dragons went to the Stade de France knowing a win in the final game would ensure they finished above the hosts in first position.

Despite dominating much of the game and taking the lead through Dzeko, nerves and fatigue contributed to a late Samir Nasri penalty, consigning Bosnia-Herzegovina to the play-offs once more. Drained by that disappointment, they eventually succumbed 6-2 to Portugal after a goalless first leg. There was to be no repeat in qualification for Brazil 2014, though. Pushed all the way by Greece, Bosnia-Herzegovina held their nerve against Lithuania in the final game to win 1-0 through a Vedad Ibisevic goal.

It was done with the type of sweeping football that much of Europe had become aware of.

The Dragons plundered 30 goals in qualifying, with Ibisevic, Dzeko and their leading appearance-maker, Zvjezdan Misimovic, all scoring, while conceding only six at the other end.

With the emergence of Roma's Miralem Pjanic, the experience of Emir Spahic in defence and a reliable keeper in Stoke's Asmir Begovic performing solidly in the Premier League, there is no reason why they cannot make an impact on their debut at the finals.

Canny Keshi can make Eagles soar

AFTER failing to reach the second round in each of their past two World Cup appearances, Nigeria head to Brazil looking to prove how far they have come in the past four years.

In 2010 in South Africa, the Super Eagles picked up just one point from their three games and finished bottom of their group, but a lot has changed since then.

Under the stewardship of Stephen Keshi, who was Nigeria's captain at their first ever World Cup finals in 1994, the Super Eagles won the Africa Cup of Nations last year and they are in a good position to go further than ever before.

Since taking the helm at the end of 2011, Keshi has broken the mould by picking lesser known, home-based players ahead of those who play in Europe and this strategy has given a huge boost to the national team.

The likes of Godfrey Oboabona and Sunday Mba, who were both playing their club football in the Nigeria Premier League when they triumphed in last year's Africa Cup of Nations, excelled at the tournament and did not look out of place alongside household names such as Chelsea duo John Obi Mikel and Victor Moses.

The Super Eagles reached the last 16 of the World Cup in both 1994 and 1998, but have since struggled on the world stage.

After becoming African champions and going unbeaten in the qualifying campaign for Brazil, though, Nigeria's confidence is sky high.

Although the squad contains a large number of young players, the Super Eagles have some experienced heads in their ranks. Lille keeper Vincent Enyeama is used to major tournaments, having played in goal for his country in South Korea and Japan in 2002 and in South Africa four years ago, while Mikel has played in plenty of big games for Chelsea.

The experience of these players will be vital if the Super Eagles are to make a splash in Brazil.

Queiroz's high hopes

IRAN make the trip to Brazil for their fourth World Cup finals and their brief is clear – better what they have done before.

On those previous occasions, progress beyond the group stage has not materialised but this time, after an excellent qualifying campaign, hopes are higher.

Iran finished top of their Asian qualifying group, winning five of their eight games and conceding only two goals along the way. Those numbers are a credit to coach Carlos Queiroz, who has given a sense of belonging on the international stage. The well-travelled Portuguese has coached at two of the world's leading clubs in Manchester United and Real Madrid and has made his mark with Iran, as the 100,000 fans who bore witness to their vital 1-0 qualifying win over South Korea would testify.

Queiroz scouted Charlton striker Reza Ghoochannejhad when he was at Standard Liege and he scored the vital goals as Iran booked their passage to South America.

BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA

Coach Safet Susic

When Miroslav Blazevic left in 2009, there was a fear his inspiration would go, but Susic has kept a flamboyant style and the Bosnians have top-scored in two qualifying campaigns.

Star man
Edin Dzeko (Man City)

Despite not always being a first-choice striker at Manchester City, 'the Bosnian Diamond' is his country's talisman, with a goalscoring record of one in less than every two games.

One to watch
Miralem Pjanic (Roma)

The talented Roma playmaker is deadly at set-pieces, and his creative spark is key to creating the chances needed for Dzeko to shine.

How they qualified
Europe group winners

World Cup record
First appearance since independence from Yugoslavia

FIFA ranking 25
Stan James odds 150-1

NIGERIA

Coach Stephen Keshi

Twenty years after captaining Nigeria at their first World Cup finals, Keshi will attempt to take the Super Eagles to new heights when he returns to the greatest show on earth as a manager.

Star man
John Obi Mikel (Chelsea)

A powerful midfielder with great experience at both club and international level, Mikel plays in a more advanced position for his national side than he does for Chelsea.

One to watch
Ogenyi Onazi (Lazio)

A fast defensive midfielder with a strong challenge. Strength and awareness help him to break teams down before turning defence into attack.

How they qualified
Africa play-off winners

World Cup record

1994	Round of 16
1998	Round of 16
2002	1st round
2010	1st round

FIFA ranking 44
Stan James odds 250-1

IRAN

Coach Carlos Queiroz

Few coaches at the tournament have a CV to match that of Queiroz, the former right-hand man of Sir Alex Ferguson and, in his own right, boss of both Real Madrid and Portugal.

Star man
Reza Ghoochannejhad (Charlton)

The goals of Ghoochannejhad – known as Gucci – were key to qualification, scoring three in successive games, including winners against Qatar and South Korea.

One to watch
Ashkan Dejagah (Fulham)

Having played for Germany at every age level between 17 and 21, he opted to play for Iran and scored twice on his debut against Qatar in 2012.

How they qualified
Asia group winners

World Cup record

1978	1st round
1998	1st round
2006	1st round

FIFA ranking 37
Stan James odds 1500-1

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Gotze has spark to fill Hass void

By Ben Gladwell

THINK of Thomas Hassler and you are not that far away from the blueprint for Germany's latest creative talent.

The pint-sized midfielder who inspired Germany to their last two major titles – the 1990 World Cup and Euro 96 – had proved a tough man for the German national side to replace following his retirement in 2000 – until, that is, Mario Gotze came exploding on to the scene.

Most at home when operating in the space behind two strikers, Gotze has shot to prominence since coming through the Borussia Dortmund youth academy, emerging as an inspirational figure for the yellow and blacks and also for Germany's youth sides.

Comparisons with the 101-times capped Hassler were always likely to happen as his star continued to rise – but some have gone further, with Gotze even being placed in the same bracket as the best player of his generation.

"He's the German Messi," Germany's two-time World Cup winner Franz Beckenbauer once said. "He has the same understanding and technique, and he's a footballer who acts purely on his instincts – just like Messi.

"It's impossible to stop Mario Gotze. He just strolls through as if there are no opponents."

Dortmund were unable to stop Gotze either when Bayern Munich stumped up the full value of his release clause – 37 million euros – last summer. Gotze was lured back home to Bavaria where the prospect of working under Pep Guardiola was cited as one of his main motivations. Under the Catalan, he hoped to develop in a similar way Messi had at Barcelona, ensuring that not only Beckenbauer would be drawing those parallels in future.

An injury picked up in the semi-final of last year's Champions League, which ruled him out of the final against Bayern, also saw him miss the start of the 2013/14 campaign.

Since returning in October, though, he quickly made up for lost time. In just 20 Bundesliga starts, Gotze netted 10 goals and laid on a further 10. He created almost a century of chances for his team-mates, becoming one of the exceptions to Guardiola's rotation policy.

Bayern without Gotze is as unimaginable now as Germany without their most resourceful asset. His flexibility means he can also play as the 'false nine' frequently preferred by Joachim Low, a position similar to Messi's at Barca.

The 2014 World Cup is a stage for him to draw yet more favourable comparisons with the four-time world player of the year, but in his head the motivation will not be to become the second Messi – but the first and only Gotze.

Mario Gotze has drawn comparisons with Thomas Hassler (inset) and even Lionel Messi

GERMANY

Coach Joachim Low
The former Stuttgart and Fenerbahce boss has tactical awareness and man-management skills to rival any coach, but only a World Cup triumph is good enough.

Star man
Bastian Schweinsteiger (Bayern Munich)
A mainstay for a decade and with a good goal tally, his range of passing and unrivalled vision make him a huge threat to opposition defences.

One to watch
Julian Draxler (Schalke)
Midfielder whose stock has risen with mesmerising Champions League performances. Linked with Arsenal and Manchester United.

How they qualified
Europe group winners

World Cup record

1934	3rd place
1938	1st round
1954	WINNERS
1958	4th place
1962	Quarter-finals
1966	Runners-up
1970	3rd place
1974	WINNERS
1978	2nd round
1982	Runners-up
1986	Runners-up
1990	WINNERS
1994	Quarter-finals
1998	Quarter-finals
2002	Runners-up
2006	3rd place
2010	3rd place

FIFA ranking 2
Stan James odds 6-1

Cool customer Low has final hurdle to overcome

JOACHIM LOW may not have won a trophy as Germany manager, yet he has already become one of the most revered managers in the history of the Nationalmannschaft.

Having emerged from his shell, with the results he has delivered managing to speak louder than any of the words he would whisper on his first appearances in the media spotlight, Low has developed a character which has endeared him to the nation while enhancing his 'cool' reputation after a series of near-misses.

Behind his laid-back demeanour, though, hides a man who is not afraid of making unpopular choices. Michael Ballack's career came to a less-than-ideal end thanks to Low, while Kevin Kuranyi soon found out to his expense that questioning the national team coach's selections was hardly the brightest career move – he never represented his country again after refusing to sit in the stands for a friendly international. However, Low only needs to refer to his successes in charge to back up his choices, although he is still not the type to boast about his achievements. Far from it. The softly-spoken 54-year-old, who fronts advertising campaigns for Nivea, does not quite come across as the bragging type.

He began his coaching career with Stuttgart in the Nineties. There, he paid for being too humble and nice.

Gerhard Mayer-Vorfelder – also the man who appointed Low as Germany's assistant coach six years later – was president of the Swabians at the time and was never so keen on Low's overly-sympathetic approach to coaching. Low's own prediction that he would not last long proved accurate and he thus packed his bags and toured Europe, gaining valuable experience in cities from Istanbul to Innsbruck, winning the Austrian league in the latter. Any thoughts of him one day occupying the hottest seat in German football were distant, until 2004.

> "Low needs to prove he is able to take that final step"

Low was happy to play an anonymous role behind Jurgen Klinsmann's more charismatic lead, but it soon became clear who was calling the shots in Germany football's most powerful double act. When the current USA manager decided to flee the nest, Low was the logical successor.

It took time for Low to adapt to being in the limelight. No longer was he just doing the hard work behind the scenes. He now had to present his findings to the press. Initially at least, that proved his biggest challenge. After his now-customary espresso, the coffee-loving Low soon settled into his stride, developing a unique style in front of the camera. At the 2010 World Cup, as much debate was given to his choice of pullover as it was to his team's tactics. "I think it's a bit exaggerated at times," admitted Low. "Especially when I get labelled a fashion icon."

Given the heat in Brazil, Low will have to dispense of his pullover and sport a more casual look, and perhaps the focus will then return to what he is ultimately paid to do – lead Germany back to the zenith of world football. For him to succeed, he needs to shake off one final misconception – that he is unable to take that decisive final step.

Germany came up agonisingly short in their last three tournaments, reaching the Euro 2008 final, but losing out to Spain and Italy in semi-finals in 2010 and 2012.

Low has since committed until 2016, but Germany now expects.

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USA

Coach Jurgen Klinsmann
Klinsmann will be hoping to defy all odds in becoming only the third man in history to win the World Cup both as a player and a manager when he takes his USA team to Brazil.

Star man
Clint Dempsey (Seattle Sounders)
As the all-time highest American goalscorer in English football, Dempsey is one of the USA's most experienced stars having spent six years in the Premier League.

One to watch
Julian Green (Bayern Munich)
Former Germany Under-19 winger could be the youngest ever player to represent the United States at a World Cup.

How they qualified
First, Concacaf

World Cup record

1930	Semi-finals
1934	1st round
1950	1st round
1990	1st round
1994	Round of 16
1998	1st round
2002	Quarter-finals
2006	1st round
2010	Round of 16

FIFA ranking 14
Stan James odds 200-1

PORTUGAL

Coach Paulo Bento
Took over from from Carlos Queiroz in 2010 and guided Portugal to the semi-finals of Euro 2012 in his first major tournament. Had four years in charge of Sporting Lisbon.

Star man
Cristiano Ronaldo (Real Madrid)
Head and shoulders above his team-mates in terms of talent and star quality, he will aim to prove he is the best player of his generation in Brazil.

One to watch
Luis Neto (Zenit St Petersburg)
Made his full international debut for Portugal only last year, and could add some much-needed youth to an ageing defence.

How they qualified
Europe play-off winners

World Cup record

1966	3rd place
1986	1st round
2002	1st round
2006	4th place
2010	Round of 16

FIFA ranking 3
Stan James odds 30-1

GHANA

Coach Kwesi Appiah
Became the first black African coach to qualify for a World Cup finals after his side's 7-3 play-off victory over Egypt, with the achievement coming at his first attempt in charge.

Star man
Michael Essien (AC Milan)
Injury may have slowed him down, but Essien remains a hard-hitting, all-action player. Starred for Chelsea and Real Madrid before his move to Serie A with AC Milan.

One to watch
Emmanuel Agyemang Badu (Udinese)
Still only be 23, but Agyemang Badu already has over 40 caps to his name, having made his debut as a 17-year-old.

How they qualified
Africa play-off winners

World Cup record

2006	Round of 16
2010	Quarter-finals

FIFA ranking 38
Stan James odds 150-1

Jurgen's winning habit to lift US

THE USA's history at the World Cup has not exactly been steeped in success – the North Americans' biggest achievement came more than 80 years ago when they finished third at the 1930 finals in Uruguay.

Despite not qualifying for the tournament between 1954 and 1986, Team USA have progressed to the knockout rounds three times since, reaching the quarter-finals in 2002 before going out to Germany.

The Stars and Stripes squad boasts such well-known names as Everton keeper Tim Howard and former Tottenham striker Clint Dempsey – although Landon Donovan was a surprise omission– but their biggest weapon could lie in the form of head coach Jurgen Klinsmann, who enjoyed a glittering career as a player.

The former striker was a World Cup winner in 1990 while, at club level, he won the UEFA Cup, Bundesliga title and German Footballer of the Year award, among others.

Goals from Eddie Johnson and Donovan during a 2-0 win against Mexico in September 2013 ultimately secured USA a place in Brazil, but Klinsmann's men will know poor performances such as the ones during qualifying defeats to Jamaica and Costa Rica will need to be avoided if they are to progress to the round of 16 and beyond.

Realistically, USA will do well to go beyond the group stages ahead of Germany and Portugal, but Klinsmann and his squad can raise a few eyebrows in Brazil.

One man show

Ronaldo to lap up limelight on biggest stage

PORTUGAL claimed their place at the finals thanks in no small part to a stellar performance from one man – Ballon d'Or winner, Cristiano Ronaldo.

The 29-year-old Real Madrid superstar scored a hat-trick in Portugal's play-off victory over Sweden to ensure he, and his countrymen, would have the chance to shine on the world stage this summer.

Portugal had lost only once on the road to Brazil, but a second-placed finish behind Russia meant they entered the play-offs against Sweden, where Paris Saint-Germain striker Zlatan Ibrahimovic almost put them to the sword.

Ronaldo had scored a crucial late winner in the first leg to give Portugal a slender advantage before firing the opener in the return clash in Solna, before the imposing Ibrahimovic netted twice in four second-half minutes to throw the tie wide open.

With the weight of a nation's expectation resting on his shoulders, Ronaldo scored two more to claim a hat-trick, a ticket to Brazil and equal Portugal's all-time leading goalscorer Pauleto on 47.

Ronaldo is therefore Portugal's star attraction going into the tournament, but he does have some talented sidekicks.

Joao Moutinho, who plies his trade at Ligue 1's Monaco, shone at Euro 2012 when Portugal reached the semi-finals, while Fenerbahce midfielder Raul Meireles has the experience of winning the Champions League title with Chelsea along with 70 caps for his country. There is also Manchester United winger Nani, a wily campaigner who is the perfect foil for Ronaldo.

Portugal have a good chance of qualifying in the top two ahead of the US and Ghana.

Their best ever finish came in 1966 – the year that England's Bobby Moore lifted the Jules Rimet trophy – when Portugal finished in third place after Eusebio led them to a semi-final defeat to the eventual champions.

Portugal also finished in fourth place in 2006 when the golden generation of Luis Figo, Nuno Gomes, Rui Costa, Fernando Couto and Paulo Sousa all starred for their country.

Paulo Bento is now in charge, and if he is able to get the best out of his star man Ronaldo, Portugal could go far.

Gyan to make up for his howler?

GHANA were one of the stand-out stories of the 2010 World Cup in South Africa. The tournament was a billed as a celebration of African football and the Black Stars certainly came to the party, missing out on the semi-finals by the most upsetting of margins.

Luis Suarez's handball on the line and Asamoah Gyan's subsequent penalty kick against the crossbar denied them a spot in the semi-finals and, as a legacy, they are sure to have the neutral's support in Brazil.

This will be their third World Cup in a row and, after becoming just the third African country to make the quarter-finals last time out, they will no doubt be ready for more.

Gyan recovered from that miss – he actually fluffed a penalty twice during that tournament – and was the joint leading scorer in African qualifiers with six goals. The former Sunderland man is currently playing in the United Arab Emirates so may not be at his sharpest, but a lot will rest on him.

Ghana's qualifying campaign suggested they are in good shape, with Zambia, Lesotho and Sudan swept aside before their emphatic victory against a well-regarded Egypt side, with their 6-1 win in the first leg of the play-off a huge shock.

What may work against them this time around is that in 2010 they were expected to do little, whereas they will be paid more attention in Brazil.

However, they have the tools to make a name for themselves all over again.

LATEST HONDURAS BETTING: 3000/1*
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Foxes to upset the odds again?

ALGERIA will be North Africa's only representatives at the finals, but Vahid Halilhodzic's side have proved they are more than capable of causing an upset on the big stage.

The Desert Foxes had the away-goals rule to thank for their passage to Brazil after a hard-fought contest with Burkina Faso. Now they will be hoping for an even bigger rub of the green if they are to progress to the knockout stages for the first time.

Algeria caused one of the biggest World Cup upsets of all on the first day of the 1982 tournament – their debut in the competition – when they beat reigning European champions West Germany.

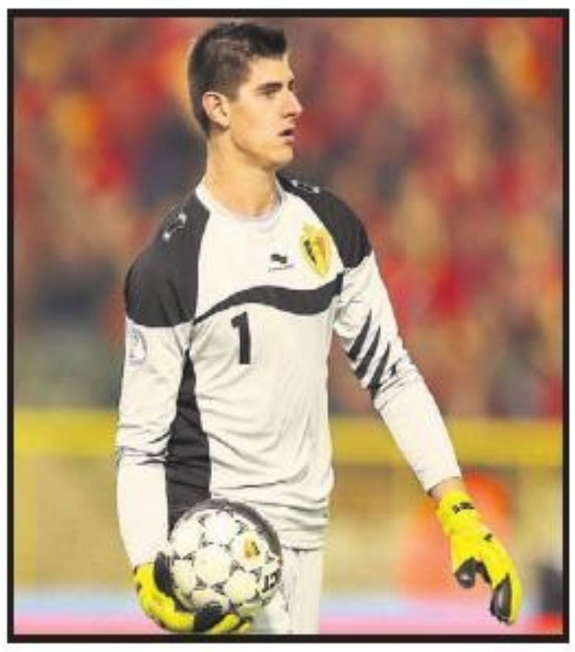
The result was ultimately overshadowed when Algeria, who were relying on West Germany to beat Austria by a heavy margin, watched the two sides play out a cynical 'friendly' after Horst Hrubesch's early goal meant both teams would progress at the cost of the Algerians.

Four years ago Algeria were drawn against England, the United States and Slovenia. Although they finished bottom of the group with a single point, their draw with England led to celebrations throughout the world's Algerian communities.

Their qualifying ties with Burkina Faso sparked similar celebrations, with the Greens clinching a 1-0 win to secure their place at the 2014 World Cup finals.

Halilhodzic's charges will meet Belgium in their opening tie before coming up against South Korea and Russia.

Golden generation is ready to dazzle



Chelsea's Thibaut Courtois has been a rock in goal for Belgium and during his loan with Spanish champions and Champions League finalists Atletico Madrid

ARGUABLY one of the most exciting sides in the tournament after finishing nine points clear at the top of their qualification group, it is little wonder Belgium are creating such a buzz.

Led by Marc Wilmots, many believe Belgium are equipped to eclipse the achievements of the Red Devils last 'golden generation' that reached the semi-finals of the 1986 World Cup.

Wilmots certainly has the talent available to rival the likes of Jean-Marie Pfaff, Jan Ceulemans and Enzo Scifo, and after an impressive eight wins in 10 matches during qualifying, it is easy to see why the current squad are being touted as successors to some of those greats.

Belgium's squad is rooted in the Premier League, where 12 of the 22 players used in qualification play. Among them are Manchester City and national captain Vincent Kompany, Everton duo Romelu Lukaku and Kevin Mirallas, and Chelsea's star man Eden Hazard, while Liverpool goalkeeper Simon Mignolet is back-up to the impressive Thibault Courtois.

Hazard's stock at Stamford Bridge rose further last term with a string of impressive performances. The midfielder was on target in their 6-0 and 4-0 demolitions of Arsenal and Tottenham respectively.

Lukaku, who was loaned to West Brom by Chelsea in the 2012-13 season, thrived again away from his parent club, joining Everton for the last campaign. He was also on target twice against Croatia as Belgium recorded a 2-1 win to secure their place in Brazil.

Guillaume Gillet (Anderlecht) and Ilombe Mboyo (Genk) were the only Belgian-based players used in qualifying by Wilmots.

BELGIUM

Coach Marc Wilmots
Belgium's leading World Cup goalscorer netted 28 times in 70 appearances. Started his managerial career with Schalke, one of his former clubs.

Star man
Eden Hazard (Chelsea)
Chelsea's £32million man has won the Europa League since his move. He is PFA young player of the year and was nominated for the main award.

One to watch
Kevin Mirallas (Everton)
Given a new lease of life following the arrival of Roberto Martinez at Everton, becoming a regular scorer and provider in their fine season.

How they qualified
Europe group winners

World Cup record

1930	1st round
1934	1st round
1938	1st round
1954	1st round
1970	1st round
1982	2nd round
1986	4th place
1990	Round of 16
1994	Round of 16
1998	1st round
2002	Round of 16

FIFA ranking 12
Stan James odds 20-1

Angry Capello has a point to prove

RUSSIA will aim to make up for lost time in Brazil when they play in their first finals since 2002.

The country will host the tournament itself in four years' time so it is important for Fabio Capello's side to get Russia buzzing by delivering a Euro 2008-style performance.

On that occasion, the Russians reached the semi-finals as Roman Pavlyuchenko and Andrei Arshavin took centre stage. Both struggled to build on their performances in Austria and Switzerland and were victims of Capello's overhaul of the Russia squad following a poor showing at Euro 2012.

The experienced coach admitted he was angry at his abrupt end to his spell as England boss and quickly showed he meant business when he was handed another opportunity. Ditching star names paid off for Capello, who delivered on his promise to guide Russia to the 2014 finals. His side topped a group containing Portugal as they scored 20 and conceded only five goals in 10 games.

Reaching the last 16 would be Russia's best performance at a World Cup since they became an independent nation in 1992. They were knocked out in the group stage in 1994 and 2002, and Capello has targeted the quarter-finals.

Legend Hong on the attack

SOUTH KOREA made tough work of their qualifying campaign, but should head to Brazil in high spirits under the leadership of national legend Hong Myungbo.

The former defender captained the Taeguk Warriors as they reached the semi-finals on home soil in 2002 before leading the men's Olympic team to bronze at London 2012 as coach.

He took over from Choi Kanghee in June 2013 after South Korea scraped through their final group by virtue of a single goal, following two draws with Uzbekistan and a pair of defeats by Iran.

The 45-year-old was tasked with making the side more solid while also increasing its attacking threat.

There have been wins against Switzerland, who went through qualifying unbeaten, Costa Rica and Greece, all sides that will join them in Brazil this summer.

Hong may wish he had 2002 team-mates Park Ji-Sung, Lee Woon-Jae and Lee Young-Pyo at his disposal, but what he has is a group of young players eager to become national heroes.

Much will depend on Hong Jeong-ho in the heart of defence, one which Ki Sung-yueng will look to protect. Son Heung-min, Koo Ja-cheoland Kim Bo-kyung will be the men to supply chances for strikers Park Chu-young and Ji Dong-won.

Hong is optimistic his squad can cause a shock. "I'm expecting my boys to go into the competition bursting with confidence," said the veteran of four tournaments. as a player.

ALGERIA

Coach Vahid Halilhodzic
Scorer of more than 200 goals in 388 appearances in a career that included spells with Nantes and Paris Saint-Germain, Halilhodzic led Ivory Coast to the 2010 World Cup.

Star man
Madjid Bougherra (Lekhwiya)
The versatile Bougherra cemented his place in the nation's sporting history when his goal against Burkina Faso sealed Algeria's passage through to Brazil 2014.

One to watch
Nabil Bentaleb (Spurs)
Despite representing France at Under-19 level, he pledged his future to Algeria earlier this year. Broke through at Spurs during the past season.

How they qualified
Africa play-off winners

World Cup record

1982	1st round
1986	1st round
2010	1st round

FIFA ranking 25
Stan James odds 1500-1

RUSSIA

Coach Fabio Capello
Has an impressive managerial record including trophy-laden spells with AC Milan, Real Madrid and Roma, although his reputation was hit by England's dismal showing in 2010.

Star man
Aleksandr Kerzhakov (Zenit St Petersburg)
Experienced striker who has been prolific in two spells for Zenit St Petersburg, which have come either side of successful stints with Sevilla and Dynamo Moscow.

One to watch
Alan Dzagoev (CSKA Moscow)
Attacking midfielder who ended Euro 2012 as joint-top goalscorer despite Russia failing to get past the group stage.

How they qualified
Europe group winners

World Cup record

1958	Quarter-finals
1962	Quarter-finals
1966	4th place
1970	Quarter-finals
1982	2nd round
1986	Round of 16
1990	1st round
1994	1st round
2002	1st round

FIFA ranking 18
Stan James odds 80-1

SOUTH KOREA

Coach Hong Myungbo
No player has represented South Korea more than Hong. He made 136 appearances for his country and appeared at four World Cup finals, bowing out after the 2002 tournament.

Star man
Son Heung Min (Bayer Leverkusen)
The versatile forward has been a star of the Bundesliga in recent seasons, firstly for Hamburg and more recently for Bayer Leverkusen.

One to watch
Koo Jacheol (Mainz)
The versatile midfielder captained the 2012 Olympic team and scored as South Korea beat Japan 2-0 to claim a bronze medal.

How they qualified
Asia group runners-up

World Cup record

1954	1st round
1986	1st round
1990	1st round
1994	1st round
1998	1st round
2002	4th place
2006	1st round
2010	Round of 16

FIFA ranking 55**Stan James odds** 300-1

LATEST ITALY BETTING: 25/1*
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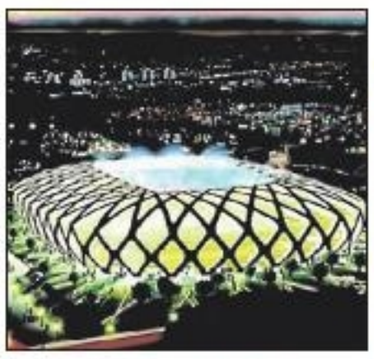
Your guide to the 12 venues around Brazil that will host the football carnival

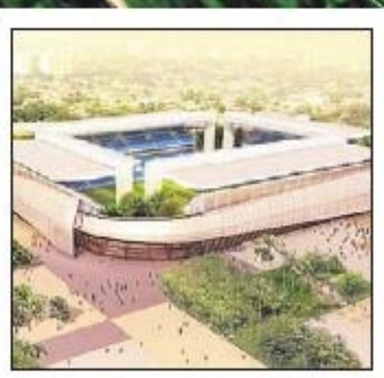


Arena Amazonia, Manaus
capacity: 42,374
Bang in the middle of the Amazon rainforest, where humidity can reach 99 per cent during June and July.

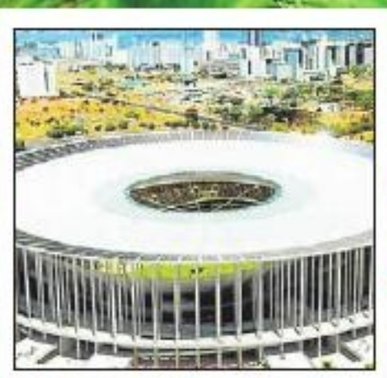
Arena Fonte Nova, Salvador
capacity: 52,048
Salvador hosts six games in a new complex featuring a museum of football, shops, hotels and a concert hall.

Estadio Castelao, Fortaleza
capacity: 58,704
Fortaleza is famous for tourism, beautiful beaches, delicious seafood and a unique carnival.

Estadio das Dunas, Natal
capacity: 42,086
Completely rebuilt, the stadium's most remarkable feature is its roof, designed in the shape of petals.



Arena Pantanal, Cuiaba
capacity: 42,968
Just south of the Amazon rainforest, but still humid and temperatures can go above 40 degrees centigrade.



Estadio Nacional Mane Garrincha, Brasilia
capacity: 68,009
Named after former Brazil star Garrincha, an icon of the 1950s and 1960s teams.

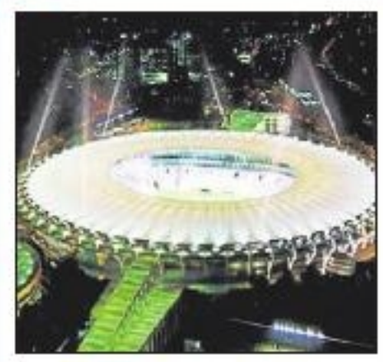
Arena Pernambuco, Recife
capacity: 44,248
A newly-built stadium home to three historic Brazilian clubs, Nautico, Santa Cruz and Sport.

Arena da Baixada, Curitiba
capacity: 41,456
Originally built in 1914, but underwent refurbishment in 1999 and once again for this World Cup.

Estadio Mineirao, Belo Horizonte
capacity: 57,483
Venue for one of the semi-finals, and where Ronaldo began his career with the Cruzeiro club.

Estadio Beira-Rio, Porto Alegre
capacity: 48,849
Located on the banks of the River Guaiba, the Estadio Beira-Rio is home to Internacional and Gremio.

Arena Corinthians, Sao Paulo
capacity 65,000
Venue for the opening match in a city known as Terra da Garoa (Land of Drizzle) because of persistent rain.



Maracana, Rio de Janeiro
capacity 73,531
Arguably the most iconic stadium in world football, the rebuilt Maracana will host the final on July 13.

LATEST IRAN BETTING: 1500/1*
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QUIZ

1 Which World Cup has produced the highest average attendances?

2 Name the highest-scoring final and what was the score?

3 Which country has reached three finals without winning one?

4 Name the English referee who famously showed Croatian defender Josip Simunic three yellow cards before sending him off in their match with Australia in the 2006 finals.

5 Who is England's top goalscorer in World Cup finals?

6 Which country is making its World Cup debut this summer?

7 Name the only CONCACAF nation to reach a semi-final.

8 Which nation won the World Cup the last time it was hosted in South America?

9 Who were the only nation to remain unbeaten throughout the 2010 World Cup in South Africa?

10 Which country famously beat then-world champions Argentina – led by Diego Maradona – in the first group stage at Italia 90?

ANSWERS

1. USA 1994 (68,991); 2. Brazil 5-2 Sweden, 1958; 3. Netherlands, 1974, 1978, 2010; 4. Graham Poll; 5. Gary Lineker (10); 6. Bosnia & Herzegovina; 7. USA (1930); 8. Argentina (Argentina, 1978); 9. New Zealand; 10. Cameroon.

4-1 Argentina to spoil Brazil's Maracana party

BETTING by Rory Jiwani of Stan James

HOSTS Brazil kick off the World Cup against Croatia with the expectations of a nation on their shoulders.

Luiz Felipe Scolari led Brazil to glory 12 years ago and he is tasked with delivering a home triumph.

'Big Phil' is the old hand guiding an inexperienced squad, many of whom have not played in a World Cup. Much depends on Neymar in attack and, while they are favourites, we are happy to lay them at a top price of 3-1.

Second favourites are neighbours Argentina, with Lionel Messi finally replicating his Barcelona heroics in the national team under coach Alejandro Sabella.

Add either Sergio Aguero or Gonzalo Higuain and you have the most potent attack in the competition. Benfica's Ezequiel Garay is one of the best defenders playing in Europe and there is experience throughout the squad. They have an easy group and we are keeping them on side at 4-1.

FAVOURITES

Brazil	3-1
Argentina	4-1
Germany	6-1
Spain	6-1
Belgium	20-1
France	22-1
Uruguay	22-1
Italy	25-1

Four teams dominate the betting with holders Spain and Germany both 6-1. Despite winning their last three major tournaments, Spain have been easy to back this year and were as big as 7-1 in March. They have been supported since and Brazilian-born striker Diego Costa could see them shelve the 'false nine' position employed two years ago. I like their chances, but they are an ageing squad whose players had tough domestic campaigns.

When Germany reached the semi-finals four years ago, it seemed experience was all they needed to go further in the future. But their defence looks shaky and they may have to start with veteran Miroslav Klose up front. Joachim Low's men drifted from 5-1 to 6-1 in recent weeks and that striker shortage could stop them going all the way.

Belgium are the best of the rest at 20-1, but a lack of major tournament nous makes them unlikely winners. France should cruise through their group, but Germany await in the quarter-finals. Uruguay have been popular, but they are no certainties to get out of Group D with Italy and England for company.

What of England? For a change, there is little pressure on the Three Lions and Roy Hodgson has picked a squad with an eye on the future. They are 4-7 to reach the last 16 and a top price 11-8 for an early flight home. Colombia or Japan in round two look beatable, but a likely clash with Brazil in the last eight makes 7-2 about a quarter-final exit look tempting.

Spain and Argentina are scheduled to meet in the semi-finals and I fancy the latter to edge through before defeating Brazil in the Maracana final.

We have winning nation/top goalscorer double betting and our 14-1 about Messi and Argentina looks a decent bet.

Argentina and Belgium should score plenty in their groups so 7-1 favourite Messi and Romelu Lukaku each-way at 33-1 would be my idea of top goalscorer bets.

Argentina's Sergio Aguero can rain on Brazil's parade

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With more than 1000 entries, the Classic's non-stop on-track entertainment showcases the full spectrum of motor sport history with huge grids featuring a mouth-watering array of Grand Prix, GT, Le Mans, single-seaters, sports and touring cars spanning more than seven decades of epic circuit racing history. This year's on-track entertainment features more than 20 action-packed races, many boasting massive oversubscribed 58-car grids.

And it's not just about fabulous cars, the stars will be out in force, too. Last year's event a raft of famous faces including TV's Tiff Needell, three times World Touring Car Champion Andy Priaulx and celebrity chef James Martin – all racing around the famous Silverstone Grand Prix circuit. A host of racing legends such as Sir Jackie Stewart and Murray Walker were present, too.

Closing date:
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The unrivalled race programme is enhanced by a vast line-up of family entertainment. Over the weekend more than 100 car clubs will be displaying in excess of 8000 classic road cars; many marking significant milestones in their marque's respective ancestry. This summer's highlights include a host of on- and off-track celebrations to honour the 50th anniversary of the iconic Ford Mustang. There's also a very special centenary party for legendary Italian supercar maker Maserati. What's more Sir Stirling Moss will be heading a record parade of grand prix cars on what's billed as 'Super Sunday'.

Adding to the high-octane festival atmosphere, the very best of classic rock and pop bands will perform live on both Friday and Saturday evenings. Illustrious US boogie band Canned Heat are making a rare UK appearance to top the bill on Friday night with Bonnie Tyler headlining on Saturday.

Tickets (which must be purchased in advance) give access to all race paddocks, trackside grandstands, live music concerts, air displays, vintage funfair plus the new BMW 'Eye' which will be giving panoramic 40 metre high gondola rides over the venue. For more information visit the official www.SilverstoneClassic.com website or call the ticket hotline on 0871 231 0849.

To win tickets to this summer's extravaganza simply answer the question below:

Q: Which famous Italian marque will be celebrating its centenary at this year's Classic? Alfa Romeo, Ferrari or Maserati?

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Option One

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PRICE INCLUDES:

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†We have included a reasonable budget for your flights. Should the cost of these fall below or rise above this amount we will amend the holiday cost to reflect these changes and therefore the price may increase or decrease accordingly. The final price will be confirmed at the time of booking. The advertised price is correct as of 27/12/13 and is based upon departure from Heathrow airport on 8/10/14

Option Two

25 September - 5 October 2014 and 9 -19 October 2014

Visiting Cape Cod, the Island of Martha's Vineyard, the Pilgrim town of Plymouth (and the Plimoth Plantation), Boston, the battlefields of Lexington, Salem, Newport (Rhode Island), New Hampshire, Vermont and Stowe.

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Skoda still shining

REVIEW: Skoda Superb

By James Richings

IT is shaping up to be another good year for Skoda after they shone at a 2014 survey of car ownership satisfaction.

The What Car?/JD Power Survey, held in Milton Keynes last Thursday, placed the Czech Republic-based manufacturers fourth for the second year running in the car brand rankings.

The survey of car ownership satisfaction was taken from opinions of 15,000 motorists between January and March this year. It means that they have been in the top-10 car manufacturers for more than 20 years.

Alasdair Stewart, brand director for Skoda UK, said: "The JD Power survey is acknowledged throughout the automotive world as a benchmark standard for customer satisfaction.

"For Skoda to have been in the top-10 for over 20 years is outstanding, and tribute to the hard work of everyone associated with the brand."

Winner of the overall car survey out of 109 ranked cars was the Volkswagen Up! named top among owners, followed by the Volkswagen Golf Plus.

The Skoda Superb had been 2013's winner.

Third was Skoda's Yeti, slipping one place since 2013.

The compact SUV took the overall title in the SUV category.

The judges said: "Owners like the spacious cabin and that they can get in and out of it easily.

"The raised driving height and large windows mean that the driver's view of the road is very good too."

To round off a good year for Skoda, the Octavia came seventh overall, with the Superb in 15th position.

The Skoda Superb was 2013's winner followed by the Skoda Yeti.

The rankings are judged by thousands of car owners with results published in next month's What Car? magazine.

• *The Skoda Superb was among the car manufacturer's top-20 entries in a recent survey*

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A1 14/63 1.6 TDI Sport
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A1 12/62 Sportback 1.4 TFSI S Line S Tronic
Met Scuba Blue, Black Cloth/Leather, 12k £16,450

A1 13/62 Sportback 1.6 TDI Sport
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A3 11/11 1.2 T FSI SE
Ibis White, Black Cloth, 30k £11,750

A3 14/63 1.2 T FSI SE
Amalfi White, Black Cloth, 4k £17,950

A3 10/10 1.6 TDI SE
Pearlescent Meteor, Black Cloth, 51k £11,450

A3 09/59 1.6 Technik
Brilliant, Grey Cloth, 38k £8,950

A3 13/63 2.0 TDI quattro S Line S Tronic
Misano Red, Black Cloth & Leather, 7.2k £27,450

A3 13/63 Sportback 1.4 T FSI S Line
Misano Red, Black Leather & Cloth, 4k £22,350

A3 13/63 Sportback 2.0 TDI Sport
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A3 13/13 Sportback 2.0 TDI Sport
Met Scuba Blue, Black Cloth, 15k £22,450

A3 12/12 Cabriolet 1.6 TDI Sport
Pearl Deep Sea Blue, Black Cloth, 10,245k £17,650

A3 11/61 Sportback 2.0 TDI Black Edition
Ibis White, Black Sprint Cloth/Leather, 24k £18,450

A3 12/12 Sportback 2.0 TDI Sport
Ibis White, Black Vienna Leather, 30k £15,950

A3 09/59 Sportback 2.0 TDI Sport S Tronic
Met Ice Silver, Black Cloth, 41k £12,950

A3 13/63 Saloon 1.4 TFSI Sport
Pearl Effect Phantom Black, Black Cloth, 11k £23,450

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Misano Red, Black Cloth, 1.2k £22,950

A3 13/63 Saloon 1.8 TFSI Sport S Tronic
Glacier White, Black Alcantara Leather, 6.5k £26,450

A3 14/63 Saloon 2.0 TDI Sport
Met Ice Silver, Black Alcantara Leather, 4.6k £27,950

A3 12/12 Cabriolet 2.0 TDi S Line
Pearl Deep Sea Blue, Black Cloth/Leather, 17k £20,950

A4 13/13 1.8 T FSI Black Edition
Daytona Grey, Black Cloth Leather, 2.3k £23,950

A4 13/13 1.8 T FSI S Line
Met Dakota Grey, Black Cloth/Leather, 15k £22,850

A4 13/13 2.0 TDI SE Technik
Met Phantom Black, Black Leather, 14k £19,950

A4 13/13 2.0 TDI SE Technik
Met Lava Grey, Black Milano Leather, 14k £19,950

A4 12/62 2.0 TDI S Line
Met Phantom Black, Black Cloth/Leather, 19k £19,950

A4 14/63 2.0 TDI Black Edition
Misano Red, Black Fine Nappa Leather, 13k £26,850

A4 14/63 2.0 TDI Black Edition
Phantom Black, Black Cloth/Leather, 4k £28,450

A4 13/63 2.0 TDI S Line
Met Lava Grey, Black Cloth & Leather, 11k £22,950

A4 13/63 2.0 TDI Black Edition
Phantom Black, Black Cloth & Leather, 7.6k £25,650

A4 14/63 2.0 TDIe SE
Met Monsoon Grey, Black Cloth, 2.8k £24,450

A4 14/63 2.0 TDI (150 PS) S Line Avant
Met Scuba Blue, Black Cloth/Leather, 4.3k £28,950

A4 14/63 allroad 2.0 TDI quattro (177PS)
Met Monsoon Grey, Black leather, 1.6k £34,650

A5 12/12 2.0 TDi S Line Coupe
Pearl Moonlight Blue, Black leather, 31k £23,450

A5 14/63 3.0 TDI quattro Black Edition Coupe
Shiraz Red, Black leather, 3k £38,950

A5 10/10 Sportback 2.0 T FSI quattro S Line
Met Condor Grey, Black Leather, 13.5k £23,450

A5 14/63 Sportback 2.0 TDI SE Technik
Ibis White, Black Milano Leather, 6k £28,650

A5 13/63 Sportback 2.0 TDI S Line
Pearl Moonlight Blue, Black leather, 7k £28,450

A5 12/12 3.0 TDI quattro Black EditionCoupe
Pearl Mamba Black, Leather, 14k £31,850

A5 13/13 2.0 TDI quattro SLine Coupe
Pearl Lava Grey, Black Leather, 377mls £24,950

A6 13/63 3.0 Bi TDI quattro S Line
Met Aviator Blue, Black Valcona Leather, 7k £39,450

A6 13/13 3.0 TDI quattro S Line
Met Ice Silver, Black Valcona Leather, 11.5k £33,950

A6 13/63 2.0 TDI S Line Avant
Met Aviator Blue, Black Valcona Leather, 2.7k £28,550

A6 13/63 2.0 TDI S Line Avant
Met Oolong Grey, Black Valcona Leather, 9k £29,450

A6 11/11 2.0 TDIe SE Avant
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A7 13/63 Sportback 3.0 TDI quattro Black Ed
Met Phantom Black, Black Leather, 15k £39,950

A7 13/63 Sportback 3.0 TDI quattro S Line
Pearl Phantom Black, Black Leather, 11k £39,450

Q3 13/63 2.0 TDI quattro S Line STronic
Met Glacier , Black Leather, 14k £31,950

Q3 13/13 2.0 TDI quattro SE
Met Ice Silver,Black Cloth , 8k £24,950

Q5 13/63 2.0 TDI quattro SE
Met Monsoon Grey, Black Leather, 6.4k £32,450

Q5 11/61 3.0 TDI quattro S Line Sp Ed STronic
Pearl Monza Silver, Black Leather, 19k £32,450

Q7 14/63 4.2 TDI quattro S Line Plus
Met Orca Black, Black Leather Plus, 6.6k £57,450

S4 13.63 3.0 T FSI V6 quattro STronic Avant
Met Glacier White, Black leather, 9k £36,950

TT 13/63 Coupe 2.0 T FSI quattro Black Edition
Met Scuba Blue, Black Nappa leather, 3.8k £29,450

TT 13/63 Coupe 2.0 TDI quattro Sport
Met Oolong Grey, Black Leather, 8.8k £25,950

TT 11/11 Coupe 2.0 T FSI quattro Black Edition
Pearl Daytona Grey, Leather, 8,6k £23,950

Q7 13/13 4.2 TDI quattro SLine
Pearl Mugello Blue, Black Leather, 3k £42,950

A3 13/13 Sportback 1.4 T FSI Sport
Met Monsoon Grey, Black/Silver Cloth, 8k £21,950

R8 13/63 4.2 quattro S Tronic Coupe
Met Suzuka Grey, Black leather, 613 miles £82,996

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Representative Finance example for SEAT Ibiza 1.4 Toca 3dr: Price £9495.00. Deposit £1695.00. Balance financed £7800.00. Interest Charges £1512.20 (including £175.00 and £175.00 fee payable with the first and last payments respectively). Payable by 60 monthly payments of £149.37 commencing one month after delivery. APR 7.5% Total payable £11007.20. A guarantor or indemnity may be required. Subject to status. Licensed Credit Brokers. Written quotations on request. Vehicles are shown for illustration purposes only. These offers supersede all previously advertised offers. Prices correct at time of going to press. Offers are subject to availability. Licenced credit brokers, written details available on request, finance is subject to status. E&OE. 0844/0843 Numbers charged at local rate.

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£214 DEPOSIT | £214 PER MONTH

60 PLATE VAUXHALL ZAFIRA 1.7 DIESEL ECOFLEX
WAS £20,000 **NOW £8,495**
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£182 DEPOSIT | £182 PER MONTH

10 PLATE VAUXHALL CORSA 1.2 16V SX
WAS £12,990 **NOW £6,495**
SAVE £6,495

£139 DEPOSIT | £139 PER MONTH

59 PLATE PEUGEOT 308 1.6 DIESEL VERVE
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SAVE £10,410

£139 DEPOSIT | £139 PER MONTH

60 PLATE KIA CEE'D 1.6 CRDI 2
WAS £15,200 **NOW £9,000**
SAVE £6,200

£193 DEPOSIT | £193 PER MONTH

11 PLATE RENAULT TWINGO 1.2 EXPRESSION
WAS £9,140 **NOW £4,495**
SAVE £4,645

£97 DEPOSIT | £97 PER MONTH

Representative finance example for Vauxhall Astra Exclusiv 1.6 Auto: Cash price £7,000.00, Deposit £150.00, Total amount of credit £6,850.00, Purchase fee £10.00, Credit facility fee £340.00, Total amount payable £9,387.17 Initial payment £175.00, 58 monthly payments £150.63, Final payment £325.63, Duration of agreement 60 months, Representative APR 13.0% Interest rate 10.56%.

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58 PLATE HONDA JAZZ 1.4 ES 5DR
55,000 MILES IN SILVER
Was £7495 Now £6495
£133 PER MONTH

SAVE £1000

OVER 100 HONDAS IN STOCK TO CHOOSE FROM

13 63 FORD KA STUDIO CONNECT
Was £9,545 Now £7,995
£159 PER MONTH

SAVE £1,550

OVER 950 FORDS IN STOCK TO CHOOSE FROM

60 PLATE SEAT IBIZA 1.4 SE 5DR
29,000 MILES IN BLACK
Was £8995 Now £7495

SAVE £1500

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Finance example Honda Jazz 1.4 ES 5dr: Price £6495.00. Deposit £99.00. Balance financed £6396.00. Interest Charges £1949.00 (including £175.00 and £175.00 fee payable

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11 11 CITROEN C3 5DR 1.4 VTR PLUS
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£108 PER MONTH

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13 62 FORD FIESTA 1.25 ZETEC 5DR
Was £11,495 Now £9,995

£199 PER MONTH

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13 63 FORD KA 1.2 STUDIO CONNECT 3DR (START STOP)
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13 13 SEAT TOLEDO 1.2 TSI SE 5DR
Was £11,995 Now £9,995

£180 PER MONTH

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OVER 60 SEATS
IN STOCK TO CHOOSE FROM

10 60 FORD FOCUS 1.6 SPORT 5DR
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£169 PER MONTH

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13 63 SUZUKI ALTO 1.0 SZ
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12 12 VAUXHALL INSIGNIA 2.0 CDTI SRI
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ON NEW CARS AT CITY PEUGEOT

14 REG

PEUGEOT *107*
£107 DEPOSIT
£107 PER MONTH

14 REG

PEUGEOT *2008* 1.2 VTI ACTIVE 5DR
£149 PER MONTH

14 REG

PEUGEOT *308* 1.6 HDi Active 5Dr
£189 PER MONTH

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5 YEARS 0% FINANCE
AT CITY PEUGEOT BASINGSTOKE

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PEUGEOT

Representative finance example for Peugeot 107: Cost Price £6550.00, Deposit £107.00, Amount of Finance £6443.00, Period 60 Months, First Payment £107.38, 58 Monthly Payments £107.38, Final Payment £107.58, APR 0.0%. Peugeot 2008 and 308 are PCP only. Terms and conditions apply. Vehicles are shown for illustration purposes only. These offers supersede all previously advertised offers. Prices correct at time of going to press. Offers are subject to availability. Licenced credit brokers, written details available on request, finance is subject to status. E&OE. 0844 Numbers charged at local rate. 55189

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Now includes 2 years servicing

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FIESTA STUDIO 1.25 3DR

- Stereo Radio/CD Player
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- Air Conditioning
- Electric Windows
- Alloy Wheels

£198 DEPOSIT & £198 PER MONTH

Official fuel consumption figures in mpg (l/100km) Ford Car range: urban 58.9 - 30.4 (4.8-8.9), extra urban 78.5 - 54.3 (3.6-5.2), combined 68.9 - 42.8 (4.1-6.6). Official CO2 emission 107-154g/km.
Representative Finance Example For New Ford Ka Studio 3dr Hatchback 1.2 69PS Petrol Manual: Cash Price: £8,002.87, Deposit: £129.00, Deposit Allowance: £825.00, Total amount of credit: £7,073.87, Purchase fee: £10.00, Finance Facility fee: £10.00, Total amount payable: £9,191.00, Monthly payments of: £129.00, Final payment: £3,573.00, Duration of agreement: 37 months, Representative APR: 7.2%. Vehicles shown for illustration purposes only. This supersedes all previously advertised manufacturer's promotions. Details correct at time of going to print. Subject to availability. Contact us for terms and conditions. 0844 numbers charged at local rate. VOSA

Ford

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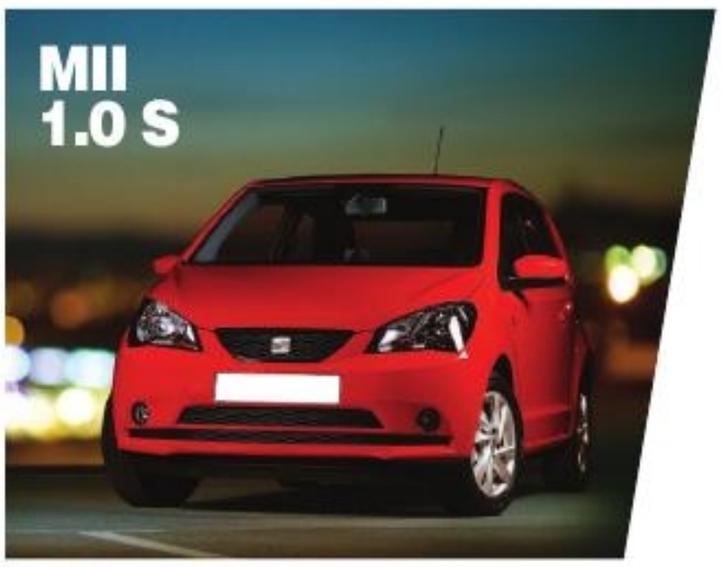
FANTASTIC NEW CAR DEALS FROM CITY SEAT



£150 DEPOSIT &
£110 PER MONTH

£175 DEPOSIT &
£175 PER MONTH

£150 DEPOSIT &
£228 PER MONTH

Official fuel consumption for the SEAT range in mpg (litres per 100km): urban 26.4 (10.7) - 67.3 (4.2); extra-urban 42.8 (6.6) - 91.1 (3.1); combined 34.9 (8.1) - 80.7 (3.5). CO2 emissions 190 - 92g/km. Solutions (Personal Contract Plan) representative example for Seat Mii 1.0 S based on 6,000 miles per annum#: Duration 36 months, 35 monthly payments of £110.00, Deposit £150.00, Retail cash price £7,560.00, Acceptance fee* £125.00, Optional final payment £3,532.00, Option to purchase fee** £60.00, Total amount payable £7,560.00, Total amount of credit £7,410.00, Representative APR 0%APR, Retail sales only. *Payable with first payment. **Payable with optional final payment. # 7.2p per mile excess mileage charges apply (incl. VAT). Further charges may be payable if vehicle is returned. Indemnities may be required. Subject to status. SEAT Finance, Freepost SEAT Finance. Offer may be varied or withdrawn at any time. Available to over 18s in the UK only. Vehicles are shown for illustration purposes only. These offers supersede all previously advertised offers. Prices correct at time of going to press. Offers are subject to availability. Licenced credit brokers, written details available on request, finance is subject to status. E&OE. 0844/0843 Numbers charged at local rate. SS140

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CITY SEAT 0843 178 7453

JAZZ 1.2 SE 5DR
£1000 DEPOSIT CONTRIBUTION
& £500 CUSTOMER DEPOSIT
£194 PER MONTH

CIVIC 1.8SE PLUS
£2000 DEPOSIT CONTRIBUTION
& £2000 CUSTOMER DEPOSIT
£257 PER MONTH

CR-V 2.0 SE MANUAL
£500 DEPOSIT CONTRIBUTION
& £4500 CUSTOMER DEPOSIT
£281 PER MONTH

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CITY HONDA 0844 846 4323

REPRESENTATIVE FINANCE EXAMPLE FOR HONDA JAZZ 1.2 SE 5DR: PRICE £12995.00, DEPOSIT CONTRIBUTION £1000.00, CUSTOMER DEPOSIT £500.00, MONTHLY PAYMENTS OF £194.00, 43M PCP, MGFV £4646.00, 6,000 MILES PER ANNUM, APR 4.8%, INTEREST RATE 4.0102%, INTEREST CHARGES £1179.10, ACCEPTANCE FEE - HUK SCHEMES £125.00, OPTION TO PURCHASE FEE £65.00, TOTAL FINANCED AMOUNT £11495.00, TOTAL AMOUNT PAYABLE £14364.10. PRICE INCLUDES METALLIC PAINT. MUST BE REGISTERED BY 31SY MAT 2014. VEHICLES ARE SHOWN FOR ILLUSTRATION PURPOSES ONLY. THESE OFFERS SUPERSEDE ALL PREVIOUSLY ADVERTISED OFFERS. PRICES CORRECT AT TIME OF GOING TO PRESS. OFFERS ARE SUBJECT TO AVAILABILITY. LICENCED CREDIT BROKERS, WRITTEN DETAILS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST, FINANCE IS SUBJECT TO STATUS. E&OE. 0844 NUMBERS CHARGED AT LOCAL RATE. SS142

FANTASTIC NEW CAR DEALS FROM CITY SKODA

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£138 DEPOSIT & £138 PER MONTH

FABIA SE 1.2 16V
£189 DEPOSIT & £159 PER MONTH

OCTAVIA 1.6TDI SE 5DR
£250 DEPOSIT & £234 PER MONTH

Solutions (Personal Contract Plan) Representative Finance Example for Skoda Octavia Hatch 1.6 TDI CR SE 5Dr based on 6,000 miles per annum Duration 36 months, 35 monthly payments of £234.97, Deposit £250.40, Retail cash price £18,014.25, Acceptance fee £0.00, Optional final payment £9,540.00, Option to purchase fee £0.00, Total amount payable £18,014.35 Total amount of credit £17,763.85, Representative APR 0.0%, Rate of Interest 0.00% fixed. These offers supersede all previously advertised offers. Prices correct at time of going to press. Offers are subject to availability. Licenced credit brokers, written details available on request, finance is subject to status. E&OE. 0844/0843 Numbers charged at local rate. SSKH

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CITY SKODA 0844 846 4331

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£139 DEPOSIT
£139 PER MONTH

BRAND NEW SUZUKI SWIFT SZ
£159 DEPOSIT
£159 PER MONTH

BRAND NEW SUZUKI GRAND VITARA SZ5 AUTO
£334 DEPOSIT
£334 PER MONTH

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CITY SUZUKI 0843 178 0751

Representative finance example for Suzuki Swift SZ: Cash Price: £8495.00, Deposit: £159.00, Total amount of credit: £8336.00, Purchase fee: £10.00, Credit facility fee: £340.00, Total amount payable: £9908.88, Initial payment: £175.00, 58 monthly payments: £159.32, Final payment: £334.32, Duration of agreement: 60 months, Representative APR: 6.4%, Interest rate: 4.75%. Vehicles are shown for illustration purposes only. These offers supersede all previously advertised offers. Prices correct at time of going to press. Offers are subject to availability. Licenced credit brokers, written details available on request, finance is subject to status. E&OE. 0844 Numbers charged at local rate. SSUK

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MOTABILITY MANY MODELS NIL DEPOSIT

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2004 Smart Fortwo Passion SP-G EDN Auto Silver	£3,000
2004 Fiat Panda Dynamic Red	£3,000
2006 Ford Ka 1.3i Style [70] 3dr Blue	£3,000
2007 Ford Ka Studio Red	£3,000
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2004 Vauxhall Corsa Life Twinport Silver	£3,000
2005 Skoda Fabia Classic HTP Green	£3,000
2007 Vauxhall Vectra 1.8i VVT Design Blue	£3,495
2005 Peugeot 407 2.0 SV 5dr Aluminium	£3,495
2005 Mitsubishi Colt Elegance Semi-Auto Red	£3,495
2005 Vauxhall Vectra 1.9 CDTi SXi [1 Blue	£3,495
2007 Fiat Panda 1.2 Dynamic 5dr Black	£3,495
2007 Vauxhall Vectra SRi Black	£3,495
2006 Vauxhall Corsa 1.2i 16V Design Blue	£3,495
2005 Ford Focus 1.6 LX 5dr [115] Blue	£3,495
2007 Peugeot 206 1.4 Look 3dr Silver	£3,495
2005 Toyota Avensis 1.8 VVT-i T4 5dr Silver	£4,000
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2004 Vauxhall Astra Blue	£4,000
2007 Peugeot 207 1.4 HDi Urban 5dr Red	£4,000
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CITROËN

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Official Government fuel consumption figures (Range): Urban cycle, Extra urban, Combined (litres per 100km/mpg) & CO_2 emissions (g/km); Highest:Citroën DS4 THP 160 6-speed automatic DStyle 10.6/26.6, 6/47.1, 7.7/36.7, 178. Lowest:Citroën DS3 e-HDi 90 Airdream manual DStyle 91g 4.3/65.7, 3.2/88.3, 3.6/78.5, 91. MPG figures are achieved under official EU test conditions, intended as a guide for comparative purposes only, and may not reflect actual on-the-road driving conditions.

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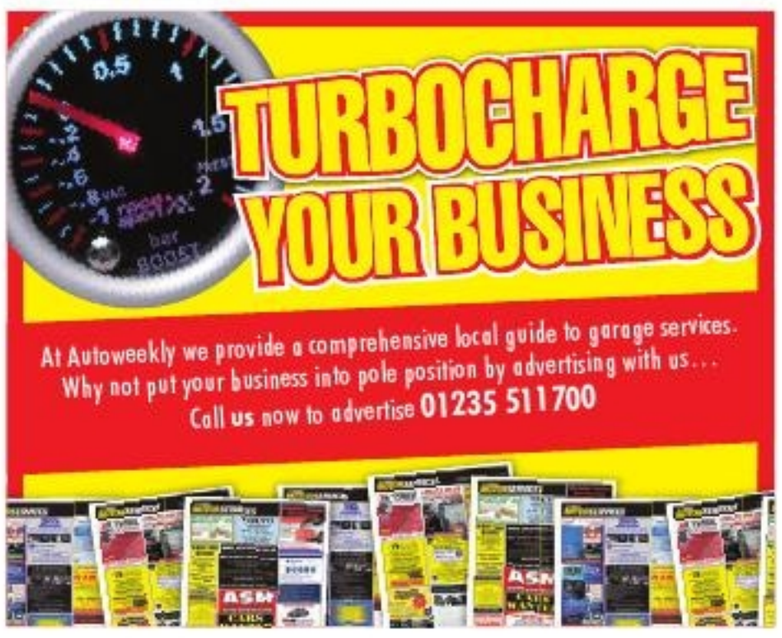

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Please see the Job Descriptions for further details and requirements. For an application pack please visit **www.twosaints.org.uk** email recruitment@twosaints.org.uk or telephone 01329 848556 (24-hour answerphone)

Closing date: 15th June 2014.

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woman seeking

FREYA 33 6ft blonde, loves dancing and have a good time, employed, own home, one son, seeking similar laidback guy/dad for dates, chats and more. **Tel No: 0906 500 3692 Box No: 412045**

MARILYN really nice curvy tactile female, loves romantic walks, cosy nights in, quality times, looking for nice male to spend time and fall in love with. **Tel No: 0906 500 3692 Box No: 411871**

SARAH 25 petite slim attractive blonde student, enjoys keeping fit, looking good, socialising, going out, being a mum WLTM similar fun genuine guy. **Tel No: 0906 500 3692 Box No: 411537**

33YR old sick of being single working mum, OHAC, likes the simple things in life, looking for romantic, honest guy with GSOH for cosy nights in and fun nights out. **Tel No: 0906 500 3692 Box No: 411887**

RITA divorced care worker with no ties, 5ft 1ins, dark hair, enjoys meals out, cosy nights in, seeking male 45-55 with GSOH and similar interests. **Tel No: 0906 500 3692 Box No: 411775**

MELANIE tall curvy attractive bubbly female who loves meals out, cosy nights in with a nice wine, walking, seeks professional male with outgoing GSOH. **Tel No: 0906 500 3692 Box No: 411509**

SONYA tall leggy vibrant very attractive black lady who loves gym, music, dining out, seeks mature responsible, respectable professional to be my soul mate. **Tel No: 0906 500 3692 Box No: 411697**

CARRIE 29yr old fun loving attractive single mum with OHAC, likes nights in or out, music, WLTM similar fun romantic handsome man for friendship possibly more. **Tel No: 0906 500 3692 Box No: 411215**

DEBS very hurt but healing female only looking for honest, caring genuine guy who will love me for me. I have varied interests and love music and Lanzarote. **Tel No: 0906 500 3692 Box No: 409275**

SUE 38 enjoys cinema, clubs, meals in/out, very broadminded, attentive, tactile, passionate, looking for lots of fun with Mr Wrong! discretion assured. **Tel No: 0906 500 3692 Box No: 411205**

JOANNE 36yr old single self-conscious mum, likes pubs, clubs, nights in/out, coast, seeks faithful kind guy 30-45 to share the rest of my life with so no time wasters pls. **Tel No: 0906 500 3692 Box No: 410569**

LEANNE young curvy single female looking for smoking hot single guy to enjoy nights in/out full of laughs and good times. Call me. **Tel No: 0906 500 3692 Box No: 410563**

MARIE 37yrs slim attractive caring, likes meals in/out, cinema, tennis, keeping fit/ active, WLTM fun loving, reliable man for friendship leading to more. **Tel No: 0906 500 3692 Box No: 411037**

SOPHIE 27yr old nursing assistant with no ties looking for discreet adult fun times with tall attractive guy 35-42yrs. GSOH essential. **Tel No: 0906 500 3692 Box No: 410717**

LYN 34yrs, pretty petite dark haired female, loves music, meals out, quiet drinks out, seeking caring male with GSOH who can make me feel special again. **Tel No: 0906 500 3692 Box No: 410137**

SUSAN 29 green eyes, dark hair, slim, looking for Mr tall dark and handsome to take me out, enjoy adult times without complications just fun. **Tel No: 0906 500 3692 Box No: 410957**

JANE pretty size 12, loves going out socialising, countryside, meals out, looking for no strings fun, nothing heavy, give me a call if you are seeking similar. **Tel No: 0906 500 3692 Box No: 410579**

SUE optimistic divorced lady with OHAC, good job, enjoys meals out, cinema, countryside, pub lunches, looking for likeminded outgoing happy male. **Tel No: 0906 500 3692 Box No: 410467**

CATHY very much a lady seeks gent up to 62yrs who would appreciate an independent professional sassy female who loves to be wined, dined and romanced. **Tel No: 0906 500 3692 Box No: 410301**

DOWN to earth easy going, attractive lady, likes walks, theatre, travel, restaurants, seeks male, 58-68 for friendship, maybe more. **Tel No: 0906 500 3692 Box No: 410787**

LAURA happy size 12-14, attractive, loves shopping, gym, music, clubbing, eating in/out, looking for sincere honest male looking for more than just good fun. **Tel No: 0906 500 3692 Box No: 410713**

KATIE 21yr old very attractive female who is up for most things, looking for daytime fun, no strings and discreet pls. Age/status unimportant. **Tel No: 0906 500 3692 Box No: 410573**

DAWN 38 dark hair/eyed medium built busty female who loves nights in/out, WLTM fun honest male/single dad with GSOH to help mend my broken heart. **Tel No: 0906 500 3692 Box No: 410483**

TERRI 44 green eyed long legged busty blonde, loves to dress up and look feminine, seeking loving, fun, honest professional to fall head over her heals with. **Tel No: 0906 500 3692 Box No: 410315**

man seeking

ROBERTO 37 years old, Italian, single from Slough Berkshire looking for a lady for a relationship, love, romance and more. **Text Only Mailbox Box No: 4352971**

MALE semi-retired, practical, musical, seeks black lady to spoil and pamper. **Tel No: 0906 500 3692 Box No: 412203**

ASIAN male, 37, normal build, seeking Indian female for uncomplicated friendship and fun. **Tel No: 0906 500 3692 Box No: 411663**

57YR old white gent, seeks lady for LTR. Age/looks/nationality unimportant, must be genuine and sincere. **0906 500 3692 Box No: 411467**

ATTRACTIVE 35yr old male, seeks lady for fun times, maybe more. **Tel No: 0906 500 3692 Box No: 409769**

NEGLECTED male seeks female for daytime chats, coffee, lunches and discreet adult passion. Age/status unimportant, ACA. **Tel No: 0906 500 3692 Box No: 406805**

ATTRACTIVE ex model, 42 seeing regular daytime fun, age/race/looks unimportant. **Tel No: 0906 500 3692 Box No: 379963**

DAVE genuine guy, 6ft, black hair, blue eyes, medium build, likes sports, gardening, music, seeks female with GSOH and genuine. **Tel No: 0906 500 3692 Box No: 388372**

OLDER woman 65 plus wanted by younger, tall male with OHAC and GSOH, hardworking, self sufficient for fun and friendship. **Tel No: 0906 500 3692 Box No: 405055**

PETER 66, 5ft 9ins, fair hair, blue eyes, medium build, likes countryside, seaside, animals, nights in, seeks female for LTR. Any age/status. **Tel No: 0906 500 3692 Box No: 410723**

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Archie on course to follow in grandfather's footsteps

BASINGSTOKE sports car driver Archie Hamilton put in a strong showing to come seventh in class in a test session at the weekend, ahead of the Le Mans 24 Hours race later on this month.

By **Adam Flinn**
news@basingstokeobserver.co.uk

Together with Ram Racing team-mate Johnny Mowlem, Hamilton completed 74 laps in his Ferrari 458 Italia, posting a best lap of 3:59.248.

It put them seventh out of 17 in the GTE Am class, just under two seconds behind pace-setters Frankie Montecalvo, Gianluca Roda and Paolo Ruberti.

Hamilton is hoping to emulate his grandfather Duncan, who won the Le Mans race in 1953.

"It's fantastic to be back at Le Mans," said Hamilton. "I can understand why my grandfather was so addicted to racing here.

"It's great to be with Ram Racing and I'm learning a lot form the team.

"The Ferrari is particularly easy to drive and I feel comfortable being on the pace that the team set for me to aim at, so I am happy that I can do my job well for the race."

Hamilton is also set to race in the second round of the International GT Open series in Portimao, Portugal, this weekend, driving a V8 Racing Corvette that he shares with Dutch driver Diederick Sijthoff.

He is hoping to make up lost ground, after a mechanical issue and a crash cost him points at the season opener at the German Nürburgring track last month.

Hamilton said: "I hope our bad luck is out of the way and that we score points this weekend.

"We were certainly capable of that in Germany and it was little consolation that the driver that hit me (in the second race) was penalised afterwards.

"I've put that behind me now and we have a clean sheet for Portimao, and I will be doing my best to get on the podium."

· Archie Hamilton in action at the Le Mans official test (Picture courtesy of Archie Hamilton Racing)

Basingstoke scrape close away victory

BASINGSTOKE and North Hants Cricket Club were let off from their disappointing batting display, beating Bournemouth by 32 runs on Saturday.

Craig Williamson's 23 was the best Basingstoke had to offer as they were bowled out for 110.

But it proved to be enough, as they were able to get the visitors all out for just 78.

It means Basingstoke have kept their unbeaten start to the season in the Southern Electric Premier League One, and sit second in the standings.

Elsewhere in the league, Hook and Newnham Basics took a comfortable victory away to Liphook and Rispley.

The hosts set a target of 160, but Hook easily passed it to win by seven wickets.

They are sixth in the league, after picking up one win and one loss so far this campaign.

In League Two, Hartley Wintney were beaten by Old Tauntonians and Romsey at home.

Their 148 fell short of the 207 posted by the visitors in the second game of the season.

Wintney sit fifth in the standings with only one win in their opening three games.

Touring car drivers head to Oulton Park for Sunday showdown

North Hampshire's British Touring Car Championship (BTCC) drivers Rob Collard and Nick Foster return to action this weekend at the Cheshire circuit of Oulton Park.

Collard has enjoyed a strong start to the season picking up his first podium of the season at the last event at Thruxton on May 4.

He has finished every race in the top-10 but one, when he spun off in wet conditions at Donington Park while in third place.

The Hook-based driver is currently sixth in the drivers' standings with 88 points, and sits 53 points behind current leader and reigning champion Andrew Jordan.

But it has been a tougher season so far for Foster, who has only recorded two top-10 results in the opening nine races.

Foster picked up two points at Thruxton, so he will hope for better luck thisweekend.

He is 15th in the championship with 27 points, eight behind the next-placed Alain Menu.

All three races at Oulton Park take place on Sunday, starting at 12.17pm, 2.34pm and 5.16pm respectively.

Sport Bites

Bison re-sign Michael Wales

MICHAEL Wales has been re-signed by Basingstoke Bison for the coming season, the club has announced.

He joined the Herd from Slough Jets in November last year.

But his season was cut short when he broke his ankle in Bison's final league game on the road at Swindon.

"We have a good core of players already signed and see no reason why we cannot win some more trophies," said Wales.

"I will be back fighting fit to do all I can to make this happen."

Rose runs into problems in Ohio

JUSTIN Rose had a difficult time at the Memorial Tournament in Ohio at the weekend, as he failed to make the cut for the first time since March.

Rounds of 73 and 72 gave Rose a score of one over par, meaning he missed the cut by one shot.

Rose starts the defence of his US Open title next week at North Carolina's Pinehurst course, and will be hoping for a better showing.

Last's years US Open victory was the first major win of his career.

New manager for the Jam Boys

WHITCHURCH United have announced Carl Bennett as their new first team manager, following the resignation of Jim Macey last week.

He will be joined by assistant manager Dan Piper for the new season, as well as goalkeeping coach Nigel Green.

Club chairman Brian Jackman said: "This is the start of a new chapter which Whitchurch and Carl were very much looking forward to."

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Inside: Archie on course to follow in grandfather's footsteps | New manager for the Jam Boys | Rose runs into problems in Ohio

TOP GOAL SCORER SIGNED FOR TOWN

Bristow hopeful for top finish for next season

By James Richings
news@basingstokeobserver.co.uk

AFTER extending the contract of last season's top goal scorer Manny Williams on Sunday, Basingstoke Town manager Jason Bristow says he is "looking forward to the season ahead".

Having scored 13 goals in 43 games in the last campaign, Williams, 31, has signed a one-year contract extension with the club.

"We're very delighted that Manny is back on board," Bristow said.

"Apart from the goals he has scored for us, he is a fantastic team player who is very intelligent and he knows how to manage teams for us.

"He's a very important member of the team, so we are very delighted to have him again for next season."

Bristow then went onto say that re-signing Williams and Liam Enver-Marum could help the club to a promotion-pushing season next year.

Enver-Marum scored eight goals in 10 games for Basingstoke last season, which included the winning goal in the Hampshire Cup final against Havant and Waterlooville last month.

"Promotion is a big ask as there are some very good teams in the league this year. Next season will be tougher than last season," said Bristow.

"We will have to wait and see what happens; hopefully we'll have a good start to the season.

"With Manny's goals along with Liam as well, the two of them can be very instrumental for us. So we are looking forward to the season ahead."

Bristow is also confident that the club will sign some more players before the season starts.

"We need players but we need the right players and we are not going to rush into it. If that means we have to wait until preseason, then so be it," he added.

"We will have a look at players and we will take it from there, but we definitely need a few new players."

The club also announced its new away kit of white with blue trim for next season has been picked following a fan vote.

· Manny Williams (left) and Liam Enver-Marum have been re-signed for next season

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